MOSES MAIMONIDES

THE GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED

VOLUME TWO

Translated and with an Introduction and Notes by
SHLOMO PINES

Introductory Essay by
LEO STRAUSS

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VOLUME II

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THE SECOND PART

of

The Guide of the Perplexed

*

In the name of the Lord, God of the World[1]

[INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND PART]

The premises[2] needed for establishing the existence of the deity, may He be exalted, and for the demonstration that He is neither a body nor a force in a body and that He, may His name be sublime, is one, are twenty-five – all of which are demonstrated without there being a doubt as to any point concerning them. For Aristotle and the Peripatetics after him have come forward with a demonstration for every one of them. There is one premise that we will grant them, for through it the objects of our quest will be demonstrated, as I shall make clear; this premise is the eternity of the world.

1] The first premise: The existence of any infinite magnitude is impossible.

2] The second premise: The existence of magnitudes of which the number is infinite is impossible – that is, if they exist together.[3]

3] The third premise: The existence of causes and effects of which the number is infinite is impossible, even if they are not endowed with magnitude. For instance, the assumption that one particular intellect, for example, has as its cause a second intellect, and that the cause of this second intellect is a third one, and that of the third a fourth, and so on to infinity, | is likewise clearly impossible.

4] The fourth premise: Change exists in four categories: it exists in the category of substance, the changes occurring in a substance being generation and corruption. It exists in the category of quantity, namely, as growth and decrease. It exists in the category of quality, namely, as alteration. It exists in the category of place, namely, as the motion of translation. It is this change in the category of place that is more especially called motion.

1. Gen. 21:33. Cf. above, Epistle Dedicatory, n. 1.
2. No example prior to Maimonides of a list of twenty-five or twenty-six "premises" seems to be known.
3. Or: simultaneously.

5] The fifth premise: Every motion is a change and transition from potentiality to actuality.

6] The sixth premise: Of motions, some are essential and some accidental, some are violent and some are motions of a part—this being a species of accidental motion. Now essential motion is, for example, the translation of a body from one place to another. Accidental motion is, for example, when a blackness existing in this particular body is said to be translated from one place to another. Violent motion is, for example, the motion of a stone upwards through the action of something constraining it to that. Motion of a part is, for example, the motion of a nail in a ship; for when the ship is in motion, we say that the nail is likewise in motion. Similarly when any compound is in motion as a whole, its parts are likewise said to be in motion.

7] The seventh premise: Everything changeable is divisible. Hence everything movable is divisible and is necessarily a body. But everything that is indivisible is not movable; hence it will not be a body at all.

8] The eighth premise: Everything that is moved owing to accident must of necessity come to rest, inasmuch as its motion is not in virtue of its essence. Hence it cannnot be moved forever in that accidental motion.

9] | The ninth premise: Every body that moves another body moves the latter only through being itself in motion when moving the other body.

10] The tenth premise: Everything that is said to be in a body is divided into two classes: either it subsists through the body, as do the accidents, or the body subsists through it, as in the case of the natural form. Both classes are to be considered as a force in the body.

11] The eleventh premise: Some of the things that subsist through body are sometimes divided through the division of the body and hence are divisible according to accident, as for instance the colors and the other forces that are distributed through the whole of the body. In a like manner some of the things that constitute a body are not divisible in any way, as for instance the soul and the intellect.

12] The twelfth premise: Every force that is found distributed through a body is finite because the body is finite.

13] The thirteenth premise: It is impossible that one of the species of motion be continuous, except local motion, and of this only that which is circular.

14] The fourteenth premise: Local motion is the primary and the first by nature among all motions; for generation and corruption are preceded by alteration, and alteration is preceded by the approach of that which alters to that which is to be altered; and there is no growth and diminution except when they are preceded by generation and corruption.

15] The fifteenth premise: Time is an accident consequent upon motion and is necessarily attached to it. Neither of them exists without the other. Motion does not exist except in time, and time cannot be conceived by the intellect except together with motion. And all that with regard to which no motion can be found, does not fall under time.

16] The sixteenth premise: In whatsoever is not a body, | multiplicity cannot be cognized by the intellect, unless the thing in question is a force in a body, for then the multiplicity of the individual forces would subsist in virtue of the multiplicity of the matters or substances in which these forces are to be found.[4] Hence no multiplicity at all can be cognized by the intellect in the separate things, which are neither a body nor a force in a body, except when they are causes and effects.

17] The seventeenth premise: Everything that is in motion has of necessity a mover; and the mover either may be outside the moved object, as in the case of a stone moved by a hand, or the mover may be in the body in motion, as in the case of the body of a living being, for the latter is composed of a mover and of that which is moved. It is for this reason that when a living being dies and the mover—namely, the soul—is lacking from it, that which is moved—namely, the organic body—remains at the moment in its former state, except that it is not moved with that motion. However, inasmuch as the mover that exists in that which is moved is hidden and does not appear to the senses, it is thought of living

4. Literally: of their matters and substrata.

beings that they are in motion without having a mover. Everything moved that has a mover within itself is said to be moved by itself—the meaning being that the force moving that which, in the object moved, is moving according to essence, exists in the whole of that object.

18] The eighteenth premise: Everything that passes from potentiality to actuality has something other than itself that causes it to pass, and this cause is of necessity outside that thing. For if that cause were that thing and there were no obstacle to prevent this passage, the thing would not have been for a certain time in potentia but would have always been in actu. If, however, the cause of the passage from potentiality to actuality subsisted in the thing, and if there was at the same time an obstacle to it, which was subsequently removed, there is no doubt that the factor that put an end to the obstacle is the one that caused that potentiality to pass into actuality. Understand this.

19] The nineteenth premise: Everything that has a cause for its existence is only possible with regard to existence in respect to its own essence. For it exists if its causes are present. If, however, they are not present, or if they become nonexistent, or if their relation | that entails the existence of the thing in question has changed, that thing does not exist.

20] The twentieth premise: Everything that is necessarily existent in respect to its own essence has no cause for its existence in any way whatever or under any condition.

21] The twenty-first premise: Everything that is composed of two notions has necessarily that composition as the cause of its existence as it really is, and consequently is not necessarily existent in respect to its own essence, for it exists in virtue of the existence of its two parts and of their composition.

22] The twenty-second premise: Every body is necessarily composed of two things and is necessarily accompanied by accidents. The two things constituting it are its matter and its form; and the accidents accompanying it are quantity, shape, and position.

23] The twenty-third premise: It is possible for whatsoever is in

potentia and in whose essence there is a certain possibility, not to exist in actu at a certain time.

24] The twenty-fourth premise: Whatsoever is something in potentia is necessarily endowed with matter, for possibility is always in matter.

25] The twenty-fifth premise: The principles of an individual compound substance are matter and form. And there is no doubt about the necessity of there being an agent, I mean to say a mover that moves the substratum so as to predispose it to receive the form. That is the proximate mover, which predisposes the matter of a certain individual. At this point it is necessary to engage in speculation with regard to motion, the mover, and the moved. However, with regard to all this, everything that it was necessary to explain has already been explained. The text of the words of Aristotle is: Matter does not move itself.[5] This therefore is the capital premise calling for an inquiry concerning the existence of the Prime Mover. |

Of the twenty-five premises that I have put before you in the form of a preface, some become manifest with very little reflection and are demonstrative premises and first intelligibles or notions approaching the latter, as may be seen in the epitome we have made of their orderly exposition. Others require a number of demonstrations and premises leading up to them. However, all of them have been given demonstrations as to which no doubt is possible. With regard to some of them, this has been done in the Book of "Akroasis"[6] and its commentaries; with regard to others, in the Book of "Metaphysics" and its commentary. I have already made it known to you that the purpose of this Treatise is not to transcribe the books of the philosophers and to explain the most remote of the premises, but to mention the proximate premises that are required for our purpose.

I shall add to the premises mentioned before, one further premise that affirms as necessary the eternity of the world. Aristotle deemed it to be correct and the most fitting to be believed. We shall grant him this premise by way of a hypothesis[7] in order that the clarification of that which we intended to make clear should be achieved. This premise, which among them

5. *Metaphysics* xii.6.1071b29–30. The quotation is accurate.
6. Aristotle's *Physics* is meant.
7. I read *taqdīr* instead of the word *taqrīr* found in the Arabic text. Graphically this emendation is very slight. It is in conformity with Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation.

is the twenty-sixth, [consists in Aristotle's statement] that time and movement are eternal, perpetual, existing in actu.[8] Hence it follows of necessity, in his opinion, that there is a body, moving with an eternal movement, existing in actu; and this is the fifth body. For this reason, he says that the heaven is not subject to generation and corruption. For according to him, movement is not subject to generation and corruption; for he says that every movement is necessarily preceded by another movement either of the same species as itself or of other species, and that what is thought with regard to living beings—namely, that their local movement is not preceded at all by another movement—is not correct. For the cause of their movement after rest goes back finally to things calling for this local movement; these things being either an alteration | of temperament necessitating a desire to seek what agrees with the living being or to flee from what disagrees with it, or an imagination, or an opinion occurring to it. Accordingly, any one of these three factors sets the living being in motion, and every one of them is necessitated by other movements. Similarly he says that in the case of everything that comes about in time, the possibility of its coming-about precedes in time its coming-about. From this there follow necessarily several points liable to validate his premise.[9] According to this premise, a finite moving object moves upon a finite distance an infinite number of times, going back over the same distance in a circle. Now this is impossible except in circular movement, as is demonstrated in the thirteenth of these premises. According to this premise, that which is infinite must necessarily exist as a succession and not simultaneously.[10]

This is the premise that Aristotle constantly wishes to establish as true. Now to me it seems that he does not affirm categorically that the arguments he puts forward in its favor constitute a demonstration. The premise in question[11] is rather, in his opinion, the most fitting and the most probable. However, his followers and the commentators of his books claim that the premise is necessary and not merely possible and that it has already been demonstrated. On the other hand, every Mutakallim desires to establish that it is impossible. They say that there can be no mental representation of the coming-about in succession of an infinite number of things occurring in time. The strength of their argument is that

8. Cf. *Physics* viii.1.251b20 ff.; *Metaphysics* xii.6.1071b5 ff.
9. Concerning the eternity of movement. 10. Or: together.
11. The Arabic pronoun for which the words, "the premise in question," are substituted in this translation, may alternatively refer to "the arguments" mentioned in the preceding sentence. This was Ibn Tibbon's opinion. However, the sentences that follow appear to prove the correctness of the translation propounded in the text.

it constitutes, in their opinion, a first intelligible. But to me it seems that the premise in question is possible – that is, neither necessary, as is affirmed by the commentators of the writings of Aristotle, nor impossible, as is claimed by the Mutakallimūn. It is not the purpose now to explain the arguments of Aristotle, or to raise our doubts concerning him, or to explain my opinion concerning the creation of the world in time. But the purpose at this point is to circumscribe the premises that we need for our | three problems; after first having set forth these premises and having agreed to take them as granted, I shall set out explaining what necessarily follows from them.

CHAPTER 1

It follows necessarily from the twenty-fifth premise that there is a mover, which has moved the matter of that which is subject to generation and corruption so that it received form. If now it is asked: what moved this proximate mover?—it follows of necessity that there exists for it another mover either of its own species or of a different species; for motion exists in four categories,[1] and sometimes these different kinds of change are called motion in a general way, as we have mentioned in the fourth premise. Now this does not go to infinity, as we have mentioned in the third premise. For we have found that every movement goes back, in the last resort, to the movement of the fifth body, and no further. It is from this movement that every mover and predisposer in the whole lower world proceeds and derives. Now the sphere moves with a movement of translation, and this is prior to all other movements, as has been mentioned in the fourteenth premise. Similarly every movement of translation goes back, in the last resort, to the movement of the sphere. It is as if you say: this stone, which was in motion, was moved by a staff; the staff was moved by a hand; the hand by tendons; the tendons by muscles; the muscles by nerves; the nerves by natural heat; and the natural heat by the form that subsists therein, this form being undoubtedly the first mover. What obliges this mover to move could be an opinion, for instance an opinion that the stone should be brought by the blow of the staff | to a hole[2] in order to stop it, so that blowing wind should not enter thereby toward the man who had this opinion.[3] Now the mover of this wind and the factor causing it to blow is the movement of the sphere. In a similar way you will find that every cause of generation and corruption goes back, in the last resort, to the movement of the sphere. Now when, in the last resort, we have gone back to this sphere, which is in motion, it follows necessarily that it must have a mover, according to what has been set forth before in the seventeenth premise. Now the mover cannot but be either in the moved or outside it, for this is a necessary division. Now if the mover is outside the sphere, it cannot but be either a body or not a body; in which latter case it should not be said to be outside the sphere, but separate from it, for what is not a

1. Literally: in the four categories. I.e., those enumerated in the fourth premise.
2. Or: a window.
3. Literally: to him (or: to it). It is practically certain that the man who moved the stone is referred to in the Arabic pronominal suffix.

body is not said to be outside a body except through an extension of the meaning of the expression. If, however, its mover is in it—I mean the mover of the sphere—it cannot but be either that the mover is a force distributed in the whole of the body of the sphere and divisible through the latter's being divided—as heat in fire—or that it is a force in the sphere that is not divisible—as are the soul and the intellect—just as has been expounded before the tenth premise. There is, accordingly, no doubt as to the mover of the sphere being one of these four: either another body outside it, or separate from it,[4] or a force distributed in it, or an indivisible force.

Now the first supposition—namely, that the mover of the sphere is another body outside the sphere—is absurd, as I shall point out. For if it is a body, it must—as has been set forth in the ninth premise—be in motion when moving another body. Now in that case, this sixth body[5] likewise must be in motion when moving another body. Accordingly it would necessarily follow that it is moved by a seventh body. This in its turn must be supposed to be in motion. Accordingly it would follow necessarily that an infinite number of bodies must exist and that only in that case is the sphere in motion. Now this is absurd, | as has been set forth before in the second premise.

The third possibility—namely, that the mover of the sphere is a force distributed in the latter—is likewise absurd, as I shall point out. For the sphere is a body and in consequence necessarily finite, as has been set forth before in the first premise. In consequence its force must be finite, as has been set forth in the twelfth premise. Hence this force must be divisible if the sphere is divided, as has been set forth in the eleventh premise. Hence it cannot move something for an infinite time, as we have supposed that it does in the twenty-sixth premise.

As for the fourth possibility—namely, that the mover of the sphere is an indivisible force subsisting in the sphere, as for example man's soul does in man—it is likewise absurd that this mover alone should be the cause for this perpetual motion, even if it is indivisible. The explanation of this lies in the fact that if this mover is the first mover of the sphere, it also must be in motion according to accident, as has been mentioned in the sixth premise.

I shall add here the explanation that follows. When, for example, the

4. In this case the mover is supposed to be an immaterial entity.
5. The sphere being considered as the fifth body, Maimonides calls its mover, should that turn out to be a body, the sixth body.

soul of a man, which is his form, moves him to go up from the house to an upper chamber, it is the body that is in motion according to essence, the soul being the first mover according to essence. However, the soul is in motion according to accident, for through the transporting of the body from the house to the upper chamber, the soul, which was in the house, was transported and came to be in the upper chamber. Now if the action of moving exerted by the soul would come to rest, that which was moved by it, namely, the body, also would come to rest. But then through the fact that the body would come to rest, the accidental motion, which had come to the soul, would be abolished. Now, everything that is moved according to accident must of necessity come to rest, as has been mentioned in the eighth premise. When, however, it comes to rest, that which is moved by it likewise comes to rest. It follows accordingly of necessity that the first mover in question | necessarily must have another cause subsisting outside the whole, which is composed of a mover and of a moved. When this cause, which is the beginning of movement, is present, the first mover, which subsists in this whole, moves that in it which may be moved. When, however, it is not present, that which may be moved in the whole is at rest.[6] For this reason the bodies of animals are not perpetually in motion, even though there is in every one of them an indivisible first mover. For their mover does not move them perpetually according to essence, for the factors that incite it to cause to move are matters outside it: either quest for what agrees with that particular animal, or flight from what disagrees with it, or again an imagination or a representation in the case of those animals that have representations.[7] When acted upon by these factors, the mover causes movement. When doing this, it itself is moved accidentally. And accordingly there is no doubt about its coming to rest at a certain time, as we have mentioned. If, however, the mover of the sphere were in it in this manner, it would not be able to be in motion eternally.

Accordingly, if the motion in question is perpetual and eternal, as is stated by our adversary — and this is possible, as has been mentioned in the thirteenth premise — it follows necessarily, according to this opinion,[8] that the first cause of the movement of the sphere conforms to the second

6. This appears to be the probable meaning of the phrase. However, if one keeps to the letter of the text, it would seem that that which is at rest in the circumstances under discussion is "the mover" rather than "that which may be moved." There are certain considerations that seem to favor the latter interpretation.
7. In the singular in Arabic. In the context the Arabic word may mean the faculty of representation.
8. Namely, the opinion that regards the movement of the sphere as eternal.

possibility; I mean to say that it is separate from the sphere according to what is required by the above division.[9] It accordingly has been demonstrated that it is necessary that the mover of the first sphere, if the movement of the latter is regarded as eternal and perpetual, should not at all be a body or a force in a body; in this way the mover of this sphere would have no movement, either according to essence or to accident, and would not be subject to division or to change, as has been mentioned in the seventh and the fifth of the premises. Now this is the deity, may His name be sublime; I am referring to the first cause moving the sphere. And it is absurd that there should be two or more of them because it is absurd that there should be multiplicity in the separate things, which are not bodies, except when | one of them is a cause and the other an effect, as has been mentioned in the sixteenth premise. It has also been made clear that this first cause does not fall under time because it is impossible that there should be movement with regard to it, as has been mentioned in the fifteenth premise. Accordingly this speculation has led by means of a demonstration to the knowledge that it is impossible that the sphere should move itself in an eternal motion; that the first cause to which its being set in motion is due, is not a body or a force in a body; and that this first cause is one and unchangeable because its existence is not conjoined with time. These are the three problems with regard to which the most excellent among the philosophers gave demonstrations.

A second speculation made by them. Aristotle propounded, by way of introduction, a premise that runs as follows: Supposing that there exists a thing composed of two things and that one of these two things exists separately outside this compound thing, it follows necessarily that the other thing also must exist outside the compound thing.[10] For if the existence of these two things had required that they exist only together, as do matter and natural form, one of them would not have existed in any way without the other. Accordingly, the fact that one of them exists separately is a proof for the absence of an obligatory mutual connection. Consequently the second thing, which enters into the compound thing, must necessarily exist separately. The following example for this may be adduced: if oxymel exists and honey likewise exists by itself, it follows necessarily that vinegar must exist by itself. After having explained this premise, he says: We find that many things are composed of a mover and a moved.

9. The one posing four prima facie possible hypotheses regarding the nature of the mover of the sphere.

10. I.e., the second element entering into the makeup of the compound thing.

He means to say thereby that these things move other things, and, when moving the latter, are themselves moved by other things. This is manifest with regard to all the things that have an intermediate status as far as causing to move is concerned. Now we find that there exists a thing that is moved and does not at all cause to move; this is the last of the moved things. It follows accordingly that there must exist a mover that is not moved at all; this is the first mover.[11] And inasmuch as no | motion is possible in it, it is not divisible and not a body, and it does not fall under time, as has become clear in the preceding demonstration.

A third philosophic speculation about this subject is taken over from Aristotle's argumentation, even though he sets it forth with a view to another purpose. This is how the argument is ordered. There is no doubt that there are existent things. These are the existent things that are apprehended by the senses. Now there are only three possible alternatives,[12] this being a necessary division: namely, either no existents are subject to generation and corruption, or all of them are subject to generation and corruption, or some of them are subject to generation and corruption whereas others are not. Now the first alternative is clearly absurd, for we perceive many existents that are subject to generation and corruption. The second alternative is likewise absurd, the explanation of this being as follows: if every existent falls under generation and corruption, then all the existents and every one of them have a possibility of undergoing corruption. Now it is indubitable, as you know, that what is possible with regard to a species must necessarily come about. Thus it follows necessarily that they, I mean all existents, will necessarily undergo corruption. Now if all of them have undergone corruption, it would be impossible that anything exists, for there would remain no one who would bring anything into existence. Hence it follows necessarily that there would be no existent thing at all. Now we perceive things that are existent. In fact we ourselves are existent. Hence it follows necessarily, according to this speculation that if there are, as we perceive, existents subject to generation and corruption, there must be a certain existent that is not subject to generation and corruption. Now in this existent that is not subject to generation and corruption, there is no possibility of corruption at all; rather, its existence is necessary, not possible. He also says that, with reference to this existent's

11. In this passage, Maimonides appears to be referring to one of Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentaries rather than to Aristotle himself. Cf. Translator's Introduction.
12. Literally: And the matter is not free from three divisions.

being necessary of existence, there are two possibilities: this may be either in respect to its own essence or in respect to the cause of this existent. In the latter case, | its existence and nonexistence are possible in respect to its own essence, but necessary in respect to its cause. Thus its cause would be necessary of existence, as has been mentioned in the nineteenth premise. Now it has been demonstrated that, of necessity, there can be no doubt that there is an existent that is necessary of existence in respect to its own essence. For without it, there would be no existent at all, neither one that is subject to generation and corruption, nor one that is not subject to them – if there is a thing that exists in this manner, as Aristotle states; I mean to say a thing that is not subject to generation and corruption because of its being an effect caused by a cause that is necessary of existence. This is a demonstration concerning which there can be no doubt, no refutation, and no dispute, except on the part of one who is ignorant of the method of demonstration. After this we shall say that it follows necessarily that the existence of everything that is necessary of existence with respect to its own essence can have no cause, as has been set forth in the twentieth premise; and that in anything that is necessary of existence there cannot be a multiplicity of notions, as has been mentioned in the twenty-first premise. Hence it follows necessarily that, as has been set forth in the twenty-second premise, it is not a body or a force in a body. It thus has been demonstrated in this speculation that there is an existent that is necessary of existence and is so necessarily with respect to its own essence, and that this existent has no cause for its existence and has no composition in itself, and for this reason is neither a body nor a force in a body. It is he who is the deity, may His name be sublime. Similarly it can be easily demonstrated that it is impossible that necessity of existence in respect to essence should exist in two beings. For the species, necessity of existence, is a notion that would be superadded to the essence of each one of these two supposed beings. Accordingly, none of them would be necessary of existence in virtue only of itself, but it would be necessary of existence in virtue of the notion representing the species – necessity of existence – a species subsisting both in that particular being and in another one. Now it has been made clear in a number of ways that no duality at all, nor | the existence of an equal or of a contrary, can be true with reference to the necessary of existence. The cause of all this is the latter's absolute[13] simplicity and absolute[13] perfection – leaving no residue outside its essence that pertains to the species, the necessary of existence – as well as the nonexistence in any way of a primary or

13. Literally: pure.

secondary cause[14] for it. Accordingly, nothing at all can be associated with the necessary of existence.

The fourth speculation, likewise philosophic. It is well known that we constantly see things that are in potentia and pass into actuality. Now everything that passes from potentiality into actuality has something outside itself that causes it to pass, as has been mentioned in the eighteenth premise. It is also clear that this something, which in one particular case causes to pass from potentiality to actuality, had been a cause of this passage in potentia and then only became such a cause in actu. Now the reason for its having been in potentia might lie either in an obstacle subsisting in its own right or in a relation – which had been absent before – between it and the thing it is to cause to pass from potentiality to actuality. When this relation is realized, it actually causes the thing to pass from potentiality to actuality. Now these two explanations necessarily require something that causes to pass from potentiality to actuality or a factor that puts an end to a hindrance. And the same thing must necessarily be said of the second something that causes to pass from potentiality to actuality or of the second factor that puts an end to a hindrance. And this series of causes or factors cannot continue to infinity. There is no doubt that, in the last resort, one must come to something that causes the passage from potentiality to actuality, that is perpetually existent in one and the same state, and in which there is no potentiality at all. I mean to say that in it, in its essence, there is nothing in potentia. For if there were possibility[15] in its essence, the thing in question would at some time become nonexistent, as has been mentioned in the twenty-third premise. It is further impossible that the thing in question should be endowed with matter; rather is it separate from matter, as has been mentioned in the twenty-fourth premise. Now the being that is separate from matter, in which there is no possibility whatever, but that exists in virtue of its essence, is the deity. And it has already been made clear that He is not a body and that He is one, as has been mentioned in the sixteenth premise.

All these are demonstrative methods of proving the existence of one deity, who is neither a body nor a force in a body, while believing at the same time in the eternity | of the world.

There is also a demonstrative method of refuting the belief in the

14. *al-ʿilla wa'l-sabab*. These two terms are often synonymous, both of them meaning "cause." Sometimes, however, each may have a distinctive shade of meaning; in that case *sabab* tends to mean secondary cause.

15. In the sense of potentiality.

corporeality of [God] and of establishing [God's] unity. For if there were two deities it would follow necessarily that they must have one separately conceivable thing in which they participate, this being the thing in virtue of which each one of them merits being called a deity. They also must necessarily have another separately conceivable thing in virtue of which their separation came about and they became two. Now in virtue of the fact that in each of them there must be a separately conceivable thing other than the one subsisting in the other deity, each one of them must be composed of two separately conceivable things. Accordingly, as has been explained in the nineteenth premise, none of them can be a first cause or necessary of existence in respect to its own essence, but each of them must have several causes. If, however, the separately conceivable thing causing the separation between them exists in only one of them, the one in which the two separately conceivable things[16] exist, is not according to his essence, existent of necessity.

Another method with regard to the belief in unity. It has already been established as true by means of a demonstration that all that exists is like one individual whose parts are bound up with each other, and that the forces of the sphere pervade this lowly matter and fashion it. At the same time it is impossible – and this has already been established as true – that one deity should be exclusively concerned with one part of what exists, and the other deity[17] with another part; for one part is bound up with the other. According to the division of possibilities, the only hypotheses that remain open are that one deity acts during a certain time and the other during another time, or that both of them always act together so that no act is perfect unless it has been carried out by both of them together. Now the supposition that one of them acts during a certain time and the other during another time is absurd from several points of view. For if it were possible that during the time | in which one of them acts the other should act also, what could be the cause necessitating that one of them acts during that time whereas the other remains inactive? If, however, it were impossible for one of them to act during the time in which the other acts, there consequently must be another cause that necessitates that at a given time it is possible for one of them to act whereas for the other it is impossible. For there is no differentiation in time as a whole; and the substratum for the action[18] is one, and its parts are bound up with one another, as we have

16. Namely, necessity of existence and the separately conceivable thing causing separation between the two hypothetical deities.
17. Assumed to exist ex hypothesi.
18. To be accomplished by the two deities whose existence is supposed.

made clear. Furthermore, according to this supposition, each one of them would fall under time inasmuch as his work would be tied up with time. Furthermore, each one of them, at the time of his action, would have to pass from potentiality to actuality, and, in consequence, each one of them would need something that would cause him to pass from potentiality to actuality. Furthermore, possibility would subsist in the essence of each of them. If, however, they were supposed always to make together everything that is in existence, so that one of them would not act without the other, that also would be absurd, as I shall set forth. For in the case of any complex composed of parts, which cannot cause a certain act to become perfect except through the co-operation of each one of its parts, none of these parts is an agent in respect to its own essence or the first cause of the act; that first cause is the coming-together of the parts of the complex. Now it has been demonstrated that it is a necessary conclusion that what is necessary of existence can have no cause. Moreover the coming-together of the parts of the complex represents a certain act, which requires another agent, namely, one who causes the parts of the complex to come together. Now if the agent who causes the parts of the complex to come together — without which the act cannot become perfect — is one, he is indubitably the deity. If, however, this agent who causes the parts of this complex to come together is another complex, the same conclusions follow necessarily with regard to this second complex as with regard to the first. Thus there can be no doubt about ultimately reaching One who is the cause of the existence of this existent, which is one,[19] whatever the manner of this may have been: whether through creating it in time after it had been nonexistent, or because it proceeds necessarily from this One. | It has thus become clear, also according to this method, that the fact that all that exists is one, indicates to us that He who caused it to exist is one.

Another method of refuting the belief in the corporeality [of God]. As has been mentioned in the twenty-second premise, every body is a compound. Now there can be no doubt that every compound requires an agent, which is the cause of the subsistence of its form in its matter. Now it is most clear that every body is divisible and has dimensions. Accordingly, it is indubitably something to which accidents must be attached. Hence a body cannot be one, both because of its divisibility and because of its being a compound — I mean to say, because of its being two as far as statement is concerned. For every body is a certain body only because of some separately conceivable thing subsisting in it that is superadded to the fact of its being a

19. I.e., the cause of the universe.

body. In consequence, every body is necessarily provided with two separately conceivable things. Now it has been demonstrated that in the necessary of existence there is no composition in any way at all.

After having first set forth these demonstrations, I shall start to give an epitome of that method which is emphatically ours, as we have promised.

CHAPTER 2

The fifth body, namely, the sphere, cannot but be either subject to generation and corruption—in which case movement would likewise be subject to generation and corruption—or, as the adversary says, not be subject to generation and corruption. If the sphere is subject to generation and corruption, it is the deity, may His name be sublime, who brought it into existence after its having been nonexistent. This is a first intelligible, for everything that exists after having been nonexistent must have of necessity someone who has brought into existence—it being absurd that it should bring itself into existence. If, however, the sphere has not ceased and will not cease thus to be moved in a perpetual and eternal movement, it follows necessarily from the premises that have been set forth before that | the mover that causes it to move in this eternal movement is not a body or a force in a body; it is in fact the deity, may His name be sublime. Thus it has become clear to you that the existence of the deity, may He be exalted—who is the necessary of existence that has no cause and in whose existence in respect to His essence there is no possibility—is proved by cogent and certain demonstrations, regardless of whether the world has come into being in time after having been nonexistent or whether it has not come into being in time after having been nonexistent. Similarly, demonstrations prove that He is one and not a body, as we have set forth before. For the demonstration that He is one and not a body is valid, regardless of whether the world has come into being in time after having been nonexistent or not—as we have made clear by means of the third philosophic method and when refuting the belief in His corporeality and when establishing His oneness by means of philosophic methods.

Now I think it fit that I should complete the exposition of the opinions of the philosophers, that I should explain their proofs concerning the

existence of separate intellects, and that I should explain the concordance of this opinion with the foundations of our Law—I refer to what the Law teaches concerning the existence of angels. I accordingly shall complete this purpose. After that I shall go back, as I have promised, to arguing with a view to proving that the world has come into existence in time. For our strongest proofs for this are valid and can be made clear only after one knows that the separate intellects exist and after one knows how proofs for their existence may be adduced. Now before all that, it is obligatory to set forth a preface, which is like a lamp illuminating the hidden features of the whole of this Treatise, both of those of its chapters that come before and of those that come after. This preface is as follows.

PREFACE

Know that my purpose in this Treatise of mine was not to compose something on natural science, or to make an epitome of notions pertaining to the divine science according to some doctrines, or to demonstrate what has been demonstrated in them.[1] Nor was my purpose in this Treatise | to give a summary and epitomized description of the disposition of the spheres, or to make known their number. For the books composed concerning these matters are adequate. If, however, they should turn out not to be adequate with regard to some subject, that which I shall say concerning that subject will not be superior to everything else that has been said about it. My purpose in this Treatise, as I have informed you in its introduction is only to elucidate the difficult points of the Law and to make manifest the true realities of its hidden meanings, which the multitude cannot be made to understand because of these matters being too high for it. Hence if you perceive that I speak about the establishment of the existence of the separate intellects and about their number, or about the number of the spheres and the causes of their motions, or about investigating the true reality of the notion of matter and form, or about the notion of divine overflow and about other such notions, you ought not to think and it ought not to occur to you that I intended only to investigate the true reality of that particular philosophic notion. For these notions have been expounded in many books, and the correctness of most of them has been demonstrated. I only intend to mention matters, the understanding of which may elucidate some difficulty of the Law; in fact, many knots will be unraveled through the knowledge of a notion of which I give an epitome. Now you know

1. Literally: from them. The pronoun may refer back either to the two sciences mentioned in the text or to "some doctrines."

already from the introduction of this my Treatise that it hinges on the explanation of what can be understood in the *Account of the Beginning* and the *Account of the Chariot* and the clearing-up of the difficulties attaching to prophecy and to the knowledge of the deity. Accordingly in whatever chapter you find me discoursing with a view to explaining a matter already demonstrated in natural science, or a matter demonstrated in divine science, or an opinion that has been shown to be the one fittest to be believed in, or a matter attaching to what has been explained in mathematics – know that that particular matter necessarily must be a key to the understanding of something to be found in the books of prophecy, | I mean to say of some of their parables and secrets. The reason why I mentioned, explained, and elucidated that matter would be found in the knowledge it procures us of the *Account of the Chariot* or of the *Account of the Beginning* or would be found in an explanation that it furnishes of some root regarding the notion of prophecy or would be found in the explanation of some root regarding the belief in a true opinion belonging to the beliefs of Law.

After having first set forth this preface, I shall go back to completing the exposition upon which we had started.

CHAPTER 3

Know that though the opinions held by Aristotle regarding the causes of the motion of the spheres – from which opinions he deduced the existence of separate intellects – are simple assertions for which no demonstration has been made, yet they are, of all the opinions put forward on this subject, those that are exposed to the smallest number of doubts and those that are the most suitable for being put into a coherent order, just as Alexander says in "The Principles of the All."[1] These sayings also are in harmony with many sayings of the Law and more particularly, with what is explained in the generally known *Midrashim*,[2] about whose having been composed by the *Sages* there is no doubt, as I shall explain. I therefore shall set forth his[3] opinions and his proofs, so that I may cull from them what agrees with the Law and corresponds to the sayings of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed.*

1. Cf. I 31, n. 7. Maimonides possibly refers to two passages of this work, one occurring at its beginning and the other near the end. Cf. Translator's Introduction.
2. In the text: *Midrashoth.* 3. I.e., Aristotle's.

CHAPTER 4

That the sphere is endowed with a soul is clear upon reflection. However, he who hears this may deem this a matter that is difficult to grasp or | may regard it as impossible because of his imagining that when we say, "endowed with a soul," the soul referred to is like the soul of a man, or an ass and a bull. Now this is not the meaning of that dictum. This meaning is rather that the local motion of the sphere is a proof of there indubitably being in it a principle in virtue of which it is moved. And this principle is undoubtedly and incontestably a soul. This may be explained as follows. It is absurd that the circular motion of the sphere should be similar to the rectilinear motion of the stone downwards or to the motion of the fire upwards, so that the principle of that motion[1] would be a nature and not a soul. For what is moved in natural motion is only moved by the principle subsisting in it, when the object to be moved is not in its place, and it is moved in order that it may seek to come to its place. However, when the object in question reaches its place, it comes to rest. The sphere, on the other hand, is moved in its own place in a circular motion. Now it does not follow from the fact that the sphere is likewise endowed with a soul that it should be in motion in such a way. For every being endowed with a soul moves because of a certain nature or because of a mental representation. I mean here by the expression "nature," the seeking to attain what agrees with one and the flight from what disagrees. Now it makes no difference whether the mover, in this, of the being endowed with a soul is outside that being – as in the case of an animal fleeing from the heat of the sun or betaking itself when it is thirsty to a place where there is water – or whether that mover is an imagination – for an animal is moved also through imagining what disagrees and agrees with it. Now the sphere is not set in motion with a view to fleeing from what disagrees with it or with a view to seeking to attain what agrees with it. For it moves away from the point toward which it had moved, and it moves toward every point from which it had moved away. Furthermore if the motion of the sphere were because of this,[2] it would follow necessarily that the sphere, at some time, must reach the point toward which it was moved and come to rest. For if it was moved in order to seek to attain something or in order to flee from something, and

1. I.e., the motion of the sphere.
2. I.e., if it was intended either to attain what agrees with the sphere or to avoid what disagrees with it.

it must be considered that this end can never be achieved—then consequently a motion of this kind would be in vain. In consequence this circular motion | can only come about in virtue of a certain mental representation, which determines the sphere's moving in that particular way. Now there is no mental representation without an intellect. In consequence the sphere must be endowed with an intellect. Again, not everyone who has an intellect with which he represents a certain notion to himself and who has a soul in virtue of which he is able to move, moves while representing something to himself. For mental representation alone does not necessitate motion, as has been explained in the first philosophy and as is clear. For you can find with regard to your own self that you may represent many notions to yourself and be capable of moving toward them, and yet not move toward them in any way before a desire for the notion you had represented to yourself is necessarily produced in you. Thereupon you move in order to obtain[3] what you had represented to yourself. Accordingly it likewise is clear that the soul, in virtue of which there is the motion, and the intellect, by which the object is represented to oneself, are not both of them together sufficient to account for the coming-about of such a motion until desire for the notion represented is conjoined with them. Furthermore, it follows necessarily from this that the sphere has a desire for that which it represents to itself and which is the beloved object: namely, the deity, may His name be exalted. He[4] says that it is in this manner that the deity causes the sphere to move, I mean to say through the fact that the sphere desires to come to be like that which it apprehends, which is the notion represented—a notion that is most exceedingly simple, in which there is no change and no coming-about of a new state, and from which good always overflows. This[5] is impossible for the sphere qua a body unless its activity be a circular motion and nothing else. For this is the final perfection of what is possible for a body to have as its perpetual activity. For it is the simplest of motions that a body may have; and no change occurs because of it in the essence of the body or in the overflow of good[6] effects resulting necessarily from the motion of the body.

When all this became clear to Aristotle, he started to reflect again and found that it may be proved | by demonstration that the spheres are many and that the motion of one particular sphere differs from that of

3. Or: to realize. 4. I.e., Aristotle.
5. I.e., the endeavour to achieve likeness to God.
6. The Arabic equivalent of the word "good" is employed in this passage as a noun and in the plural.

another in regard to swiftness or slowness as well as the direction of movement, although circular motion was common to all of them. According to physical speculation, he was compelled to believe that the notion represented to itself by one particular sphere, in consequence of which notion it accomplishes the movement[7] swiftly in one day, is not the notion represented to itself by another sphere, which accomplishes one movement in thirty years. Accordingly he affirmed categorically that there exist separate intellects whose number is equal to that of the spheres, that every sphere desires the intellect that is its principle and is the mover causing it to move according to the movement proper to it, and that that intellect is the mover of that sphere. Neither Aristotle nor anyone else has affirmed categorically that the number of the intellects is ten or one hundred; but he stated that their number was equal to that of the spheres. As it was thought in his time that there are fifty spheres, Aristotle stated that, if that were so, there were fifty separate intellects. For in his time there was little knowledge of mathematics, and this science had not been brought to perfection. It accordingly was thought that every motion requires a separate sphere. For they did not know that many apparent movements may result from the inclination of one sphere. Thus you might speak of the motion of a star with respect to longitude and declination and also of its apparent motion in the circle of the horizon as far as the places of its rising and setting are concerned. However, this is not our subject, and we shall now go back to that with which we were dealing.

With regard to the opinion of the later philosophers that there are ten separate intellects, it may be explained by the fact that they counted the globes in which there are stars as well as the all-encompassing sphere, although in some of these globes there are several spheres. The globes are nine according to their reckoning; namely, the one that encompasses the universe, the sphere of the fixed stars, and the spheres of the seven | planets.[8] The tenth intellect is the Active Intellect, whose existence is indicated by the facts that our intellects pass from potentiality to actuality and that the forms of the existents that are subject to generation and corruption are actualized after they have been in their matter only in potentia. Now everything that passes from potentiality to actuality must have necessarily something that causes it to pass and that is outside it. And this cause must belong to the species of that which it causes to pass from potentiality to actuality. For a carpenter does not build a storehouse qua a maker, but because there subsists in his mind the form of the storehouse. For it

7. I.e. one revolution. 8. Literally: seven stars.

is the form of the storehouse subsisting in the mind of the carpenter that caused the form of the storehouse to pass into actuality and to be realized in timber. In this way the giver of a form is indubitably a separate form, and that which brings intellect into existence is an intellect, namely, the Active Intellect. Thus the relation of the Active Intellect to the elements[9] and that which is composed of them is similar to the relation obtaining between every separate intellect particularly related to a sphere and that sphere. Furthermore the relation of the intellect in actu existing in us, which derives from an overflow of the Active Intellect and through which we apprehend the Active Intellect, is similar to that of the intellect of every sphere that exists in the latter, deriving its being in it from the overflow of a separate intellect – an intellect through which the sphere apprehends the separate intellect, makes a mental representation of the latter, desires to become like it, and in consequence moves.[10]

In this connection [Aristotle] deals further with a matter that has already been demonstrated, namely, that God, may He be magnified and held sublime, does not do things in a direct fashion. Thus He burns by means of a fire, and this fire is moved by means of the motion of the sphere, and the sphere in its turn is moved by means of a separate intellect. For the intellects are the angels, which are near to Him, by means of whom the spheres are moved. And as by reason of their being separate from matter, no multiplicity due to | a difference between their essences is at all possible with regard to them because they are not bodies, it follows necessarily that the deity, may He be exalted, has – according to him[11] – brought into existence the first intellect, who is the mover of the first sphere in the way that we have explained. Again the intellect that causes the second sphere to move has as its cause and principle the first intellect, and so on, so that the intellect that causes the sphere that is contiguous with us to move is the cause and principle of the Active Intellect. With the latter the separate intellects come to an end, just as bodies begin similarly with the highest sphere and come to an end with the elements and what is composed of them. It cannot be true that the intellect that moves the highest

9. The four elements found in the world of generation and corruption are meant.
10. The text does not make clear what is the second term of the relation of which the first term is either the intellect in actu existing in man or the one existing in each heavenly sphere. It seems probable, however, that Maimonides had in mind the relation between the human intellect in actu and the Active Intellect, on the one hand, and the relation between the intellect in actu of each sphere and the separate intellect on which that sphere depends, on the other.
11. I.e., according to Aristotle.

sphere should be identical with the necessary of existence. For it has in common with the other intellects one separately conceivable thing, namely, that represented by the act of causing bodies to move. Now every intellect is distinguished from any other intellect with respect to one separately conceivable thing. In consequence each one of the ten intellects is endowed with two separately conceivable things. Accordingly there can be no doubt that all of them have one first cause. This is the assertion and the opinion of Aristotle; and his proofs for this, in so far as they are probable, are set forth in the works of his followers. All his disquisition may be summed up as follows: All spheres are living bodies, endowed with a soul and an intellect, having a mental representation and an apprehension of the deity and also a mental representation of their own first principles. In that which exists,[12] there are separate intellects that are in no way a body. All of them overflow from God, may He be exalted, and they are the intermediaries between God and all these bodies.

I now shall explain to you in the following chapters what in our Law corresponds to these opinions and what in it differs from them. |

CHAPTER 5

As for the assertion that the spheres are living and rational, I mean to say endowed with apprehension, it is true and certain also from the point of view of the Law; they are not dead bodies similar to fire and earth – as is thought by the ignorant – but they are – as the philosophers say – living beings who obey their Lord and praise Him and extol Him greatly. Thus Scripture says: *The heavens tell of the glory of God, and so on.*[1] How very remote from mental representation of the truth are those who think that this is language appropriate to the state of the speaker. For the *terms speaking and telling*[2] are applied together in Hebrew only to a being endowed with intellect. The manifest proof of the fact that Scripture describes their state according to their essence – I mean to say the state of the spheres – not the state according to which people consider them, is the dictum:[3] *There is no speech, there are no words, neither is their voice*

12. Literally: in existence.
1. Ps. 19:2. The verse continues: *and the firmament speaketh of His handiwork.*
2. The verb "to speak" occurs in the second part of the verse; cf. preceding note.
3. Occurring in the same Psalm as the verse quoted earlier in this chapter.

heard.[4] It thus makes it clear and manifest that it describes the essence of the spheres as praising God and making known His wonders without speech of lip and tongue. And this is correct. For he who praises through speech only makes known what he has represented to himself. Now this very representation is the true praise, whereas the words concerning it are meant to instruct someone else or to make it clear concerning oneself that one has had the apprehension in question. Thus it says, *Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still, Selah,*[5] as we have explained.[6] This is a proof based on the Law that may be denied only by one who is ignorant or obstinate. As for the opinion of the *Sages* concerning this, I do not think that it requires to be explained or proved. Consider the way they arranged *the blessing of the moon,* as well as what is repeatedly stated in the prayers and the texts of the *Midrashim*[7] regarding the dicta: *And the host of heaven | worshippeth Thee,*[8] and: *When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.*[9] Similar dicta occur frequently in what they say. Thus they say in *Bereshith Rabbah*[10] with regard to the dictum of Him, may He be exalted,[11] *And the earth was tohu*[12] *and bohu:*[13] [*It was*] *mourning* [*toha*][14] *and crying* [*boha*][14]— which means that it, I mean the earth, cried woe and howled[15] because of her evil lot. *It said, I and they were created together*—which means the earth and the heavens. [*Yet*] *those above are alive and those below dead.* They also have said explicitly that the heavens are living bodies and not dead ones like the elements. Thus it has become clear to you that what Aristotle said likewise with regard to the sphere being endowed with apprehension and mental representation corresponds to the dicta of our prophets and of the bearers of our Law, who are the *Sages, may their memory be blessed.*

Know that there is a consensus of all the philosophers to the effect that the governance of this lower world is perfected by means of the forces overflowing to it from the sphere, as we have mentioned,[16] and that the spheres apprehend and know that which they govern. This also is expounded in the letter of the *Torah,* which says:[17] *Which the Lord thy God hath*

4. Ps. 19:4. 5. Ps. 4:5. 6. Cf. I 50 and 59. 7. In the text: *Midrashoth.*
8. Neh. 9:6. Cf. B.T., Sanhedrin, 91b. 9. Job 38:7. Cf. B.T., Ḥullin, 91b.
10. Genesis Rabbah, II. 11. Gen. 1:2.
12. In the English Bible this word is translated: *without form.*
13. In the English Bible this word is translated: *void.*
14. An Aramaic word. 15. Or: writhed in pain. 16. Cf. I 72.
17. Deut. 4:19. The verse begins as follows: *And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun and the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven, thou be drawn away and worship them and serve them.* The words quoted by Maimonides follow.

allotted unto all the peoples, which means that He made the spheres intermediaries for the governance of the created beings and not with a view to their being worshipped. It says clearly: *And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide, and so on.*[18] Now the meaning of *ruling* is domination through governance; and this is a supplementary notion added to that of light and darkness, which is the proximate cause of generation and corruption. For the meaning of light and darkness is referred to in the words: *And to divide the light from the darkness.*[19] Now it is absurd to assume that he who governs something should not know that thing which he governs, provided that the true reality of governance, as the word is applied here, is known. We shall speak at length about this subject elsewhere. |

CHAPTER 6

The fact that angels exist does not require that a proof deriving from the Law be brought forward. For the *Torah* has stated this in a number of passages. Now you should know that *Elohim* is a term applied to judges. Thus: *The cause of both parties shall come before Elohim.*[1] For this reason this word is applied figuratively to the angels and to the deity because of His being a judge of the angels. Hence it says: *For the Lord your Elohim*[2]— this being addressed to the whole of mankind; after which it says:[3] *He is the Elohim of the Elohim*—which means, the deity of the angels—*and the Lord of lords*—that is, the Master of the spheres and the stars, which are the *lords* of everybody other than themselves. This is the meaning of the verse, and not that the *Elohim and the lords*[4] belong to the human species; for they are too lowly for that. This is so particularly in view of the fact that the dictum, *your Elohim*, includes the whole human species, the rulers as well as the ruled. Nor can the meaning[5] be either that He, may He be exalted, is the master of everything that is believed to be divine—even if it is fashioned of stone and wood. For there is no glorification and no magnification in the affirmation that the deity is the master of stone, timber,

18. Gen. 1:18. The verse refers to the sun and the moon. 19. Gen. 1:18.
1. Exod. 22:8. *Elohim* in this verse means "judges." This is also the interpretation found in the English Bible's translation of this passage.
2. Deut. 10:17. 3. In the same verse. 4. Referred to therein.
5. Of the expression, *Elohim of the Elohim*, and perhaps also of that other expression, *the Lord of lords.*

and of a piece of cast metal. What is meant is that He, may He be exalted, is the Judge of the judges, I mean to say of the angels, and the Master of the spheres. Now a chapter making it clear for us that the angels are not bodies occurs previously in this Treatise.[6] This is also what Aristotle says. But there is a difference in the terms; for he speaks of separate intellects, and we speak of *angels*.

As for his saying that these separate intellects are also intermediaries | between God, may He be exalted, and the existents; and that it is through their intermediation that the spheres are in motion, which motion is the cause of the generation of the things subject to generation: this too is the textual teaching of all the books. For you never find therein that an act was performed by God otherwise than *through an angel*. Now you already know that the meaning of *angel* is messenger. Accordingly everyone who carries out an order is an *angel*; so that the movements of animals, even when these beings are not rational, are stated in the text of the Scripture to have been accomplished *through an angel*, if the motion was produced in accordance with the intention of the deity, who put a force in the living being that moved him according to that motion. Thus it says: *My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me.*[7] The movements of *Balaam's she-ass* are all of them brought about *through an angel*. Even the elements are in their turn called *angels*. Thus: *Who makest winds His angels, the flaming fire His ministers.*[8] It will be explained to you that *angel* is said of a messenger[9] from among men; Thus: *And Jacob sent angels.*[10] It is also said of a prophet; thus: *And the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim;*[11] *And He sent an angel, and brought us forth from Egypt.*[12] It is furthermore said of the separate intellects that appear to the prophets *in the vision of prophecy*. In addition it is said of the animal forces, as we shall explain later on.

Now our discourse here shall deal only with the *angels*, who are separate intellects. For our Law does not deny the fact that He, may He be exalted, governs that which exists here through the intermediation of the *angels*. Thus there is the text of the *Sages* with reference to the dictum of the *Torah: Let us make man in our image,*[13] and its dictum: *Come, let us go down,*[14] which dicta are *in the plural*. They said: *The Holy One, blessed be He, as it were, does nothing without contemplating*[15] *the host*

6. Cf. I 49. 7. Dan. 6:23. 8. Ps. 104:4.
9. *rasūl*. The word also means "prophet"; i.e., an envoy of God.
10. Gen. 32:4. 11. Judg. 2:1. 12. Num. 20:16. 13. Gen. 1:26.
14. Gen. 11:7. The verse continues: *and there confound their language.*
15. Literally: *before He has contemplated.*

[*pamalya*] *above.*[16] Marvel[17] at their saying *contemplating*, for Plato uses literally the same expression, saying that God looks at the world of the intellects | and that in consequence that which exists overflows from Him. In certain other passages, they similarly make the absolute assertion: *The Holy One, blessed be He, does nothing without consulting*[18] *the host* [*pamalya*] *above.*[19] The word *pamalya* means, in the Greek language, army. In *Bereshith Rabbah*[20] and in *Midrash Qoheleth*,[21] it is likewise said in reference to the dictum: *What they have already made.*[22] *It is not said: He has made, but: they have made.* [*That is,*] *He, as it were, and His tribunal have decided regarding each of your limbs and have put it in its position; for it is said: He hath made thee and established thee.*[23] In *Bereshith Rabbah*, they have likewise said: *Wherever it is said: And the Lord, He and His tribunal* [*are meant*].[24]

In all these texts the intention is not, as is thought by the ignorant, to assert that there is speech on the part of [God], may He be exalted, or deliberation or sight or consultation and recourse for help to the opinion of someone else. For how could the Creator seek help from that which He has created? Rather do all these texts state plainly that all this—including the various parts of that which exists and even the creation of the limbs of animals as they are—has been brought about through the intermediation of angels. For all forces are angels. How great is the blindness of ignorance and how harmful! If you told a man who is one of those who deem themselves *the Sages of Israel* that the deity sends an angel, who enters the womb of a woman and forms the fetus there, he would be pleased with this assertion and would accept it and would regard it as a manifestation of greatness and power on the part of the deity, and also of His wisdom, may He be exalted. Nevertheless he would also believe at the same time that the *angel* is a body formed of burning fire and that his size is equal to that of a third part of the whole world. He would regard all this as possible with respect to God. But if you tell him that God has placed in the sperm a formative force shaping the limbs and giving them their configuration

16. The Hebrew *pamalya*, deriving in the last analysis from the Latin *familia*, means servants or courtiers surrounding a dignitary. The translation "host" is intended to conform to Maimonides' explanation of *pamalya* as meaning an army. The origin of this quotation is unknown. Cf. n. 19 below for the source of a similar dictum.
17. Or: I marvel. 18. Literally: *before He has consulted.*
19. B.T., Sanhedrin, 38b; Jerusalem Talmud (hereafter cited J.T.), Sanhedrin, I.
20. Genesis Rabbah, XII. 21. Midrash Qoheleth, 2:12.
22. Eccles. 2:12. The entire verse reads: *And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness and folly; for what can the man make that cometh after the king? what they have already made.*
23. Deut. 32:6. 24. Genesis Rabbah, LI.

and that this force is the *angel*, or that all the forms derive from the act of the Active Intellect and that the latter is the *angel* and the *prince of the world* constantly mentioned by the *Sages*, | the man would shrink from this opinion. For he does not understand the notion of the true greatness and power that consists in the bringing into existence of forces active in a thing, forces that cannot be apprehended by any sense. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, have stated explicitly for the benefit of him who is a *Sage* that every force appertaining to the bodily forces is an *angel*—all the more, the forces distributed in the world—and that every force has only one particular activity proper to it and not two activities. For it is said in *Bereshith Rabbah: It has been learnt: one angel does not perform two missions, nor do two angels perform one mission.*[25] Now this is the characteristic of all forces. A circumstance that should confirm in your opinion the assertion that individual natural and psychic forces are called *angels* is their dictum figuring in a number of passages and deriving originally from *Bereshith Rabbah: Every day the Holy One, blessed be He, creates a group of angels; they sing before Him, and go away.*[26] When this dictum was criticized by a recourse to another dictum indicating that the angels are permanent—and in fact it has been explained several times that the angels are *living and existing permanently*—the answer is given that some of them are permanent and others liable to perish. And such is the truth of the matter. For the individual forces are being constantly generated and corrupted, whereas the species to which these forces belong are permanent and do not become defective. In the source referred to,[27] it is said with reference to the story of *Judah and Tamar: Rabbi Yoḥanan said: [Judah] wanted to pass by, but the Holy One, blessed be He, caused the angel put in charge of lust*—he means to say: the force of orgasm—*to present himself to him.* Thus this force too is called by him an *angel.* And thus you will find that they constantly speak of: *an angel put in charge of this or that.* For every force charged by God, may He be exalted, with some business is *an angel put in charge of that thing.* Accordingly, *Midrash Qoheleth* has the following text: *When man sleeps, his soul speaks to the angel,* | *and the angel to the cherub.*[28] Thereby they have stated plainly to him who understands and cognizes intellectually that the imaginative faculty[29]

25. Genesis Rabbah, L.
26. Genesis Rabbah, LXXVIII. Cf. also (Ekhah Rabbathi) Midrash on Lamentations, 3:23; and B.T., Ḥagigah, 14a.
27. Genesis Rabbah, LXXXV. 28. Midrash Qoheleth, 10:20.
29. The Arabic text has the word *quwwah*, which in other passages of the present chapter has been translated "force."

is likewise called an *angel* and that the intellect is called a *cherub*. How beautiful must this appear to him who knows, and how distasteful to the ignorant!

We have already spoken of the fact that every form in which an *angel* is seen, exists *in the vision of prophecy*. You will find that there are prophets who see the *angels* as if they were human individuals. Thus it is said: *And, lo, three men.*[30] Others from among them see [an angel] as if he were a man causing terror and amazement. Thus it is said: *And his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible.*[31] Again others from among them see [an angel] as fire. Thus: *And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in the heart of fire.*[32] There[33] it is said: *To Abraham whose power was great,*[34] *they appeared in the likeness of men; to Lot whose power was weak,*[35] *they appeared in the likeness of angels.* This is a great prophetic secret. However, the discussion of prophecy will occur later on when it is proper. There[36] it is further said: *Before they accomplish their mission, they are called men; when they have accomplished it, they are endued with the angelic state.* Consider how clear it is in every respect that the notion of an *angel* is that of a certain act, and that every *vision of an angel* occurs only *in a vision of prophecy* and according to the state of him who apprehends.

There is then nothing in what Aristotle for his part has said about this subject that is not in agreement with the Law. However, a point on which he disagrees with us in all this is constituted by his belief that all these things are eternal and that they proceed necessarily from Him, may He be exalted, in that way. For we ourselves believe that all this has been created, and that God has created the separate intellects and has put in the sphere the force of desire toward them, and that it was He who created the intellects and the spheres and put in them the governing forces. As to this we do disagree with him. Later on you shall hear his opinion and the opinion of the true Law regarding the world's having been produced in time. |

30. Gen. 18:2. 31. Judg. 13:6. 32. Exod. 3:2.
33. I.e., in Genesis Rabbah, L. 34. Literally: *beautiful*. 35. Literally: *bad*.
36. I.e., in Genesis Rabbah, L. The passage, as quoted by Maimonides, differs slightly from the one found in the text of Genesis Rabbah known to us.

CHAPTER 7

We have explained the equivocality of the term *angel* and that it includes the intellects, the spheres, and the elements, inasmuch as all of them carry out orders.[1] Do not think, however, that the spheres or the intellects have the same rank as the other[2] corporeal forces, which are a thing of nature and do not apprehend their acts.[3] For the spheres and the intellects apprehend their acts, choose freely, and govern, but in a way that is not like free choice and our governance, which deal wholly with things that are produced anew. The *Torah* has by its letter expressed several notions that drew our attention to this. Thus the *angel* says to *Lot: For I cannot do anything, and so on;*[4] and again in order to deliver him, he says to him: *Behold, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also.*[5] Scripture also says: *Take heed of him, and hearken unto his voice; Be not rebellious against him; for he will not pardon your transgression; for My name is in him.*[6] All this indicates to you that they[7] apprehend their acts and have will and free choice with regard to the governance committed to them, just as we have will with regard to that which from the foundation of our existence has been committed to us and given over to our power. Only we sometimes do things that are more defective than other things, and our governance and our action are preceded by privations; whereas the intellects and the spheres are not like that, but always do that which is good, and only that which is good is with them, as we shall explain in several chapters; and all that they have exists always in perfection and in actu since they have come into existence. |

1. In the singular in the text.
2. Or: all the (*sāʾir*). In classical Arabic the word means "the other" or "all the other." However, in later Arabic it may mean "all."
3. In the singular in the text.
4. Gen. 19:22. 5. Gen. 19:21. 6. Exod. 23:21.
7. I.e., the spheres and the intellects.

CHAPTER 8

One of the ancient opinions that are[1] widespread among the philosophers and the general run of people consists in the belief that the motion of the spheres produces very fearful and mighty sounds. Their proof for this belief consisted in their saying that when the small bodies that are with us move with a rapid motion, a great clatter and a disturbing boom are heard to proceed from them. In consequence this should be all the more the case with respect to the bodies of the sun, the moon , and the stars, having regard to their size and velocity. The entire sect of Pythagoras believes that these bodies emit pleasant sounds having – though mighty – the same proportion to each other as that obtaining in musical melodies. And it was their task to give the reasons why we do not hear these fearful and mighty sounds. This opinion also is generally known in our religious community. Do you not see that the *Sages* describe the might of the sound produced by the sun when it every day proceeds on its way in the sphere?[2] The same affirmation with regard to the whole necessarily follows.

Aristotle, however, does not accept this[3] and makes it clear that the heavenly bodies produce no sound. You will find this statement in his book "On the Heaven"; from the passage there you will understand this. You should not find it blameworthy that the opinion of Aristotle disagrees with that of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* as to this point. For this opinion, I mean to say the one according to which the heavenly bodies produce sounds, is consequent upon the belief in *a fixed sphere and in stars that return.*[4] You know, on the other hand, that in these astronomical matters they preferred the opinion of *the sages of the nations of the world* to their own. For they explicitly say: *The sages of the nations of the world have vanquished.*[5] And this is correct. For everyone who argues in speculative matters does this according to the conclusions to which he was led by his speculation. Hence the conclusion whose demonstration is correct is believed. |

1. Or: were. 2. Cf. B.T., Yoma, 20b; Genesis Rabbah, VI.
3. Cf. *De Caelo* ii.9.290b12 ff. 4. B.T., Pesaḥim, 94b. 5. Cf. B.T., Pesaḥim, 94b.

CHAPTER 9

We have already made it clear to you that in Aristotle's time the number of the spheres had not been accurately established and that those who in our time count nine spheres, only count as one a globe that includes several spheres, as is clear to whoever has studied the science of astronomy. For this reason you also should not regard as blameworthy this dictum of some[1] of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed:*[2] *There are two firmaments; for it is said: Behold, unto the Lord thy God belongeth the heaven, and the heaven of heavens.*[3] For he who says this counts the whole globe of the stars — I mean the spheres in which there are stars — as one globe, and again counts the globe of the all-encompassing sphere in which there is no star as the second globe. Consequently, he says: *There are two firmaments.*

Now I shall first set forth for your benefit a preface needed for the purpose that I have in view in this chapter. This preface is as follows. Know that regarding the spheres of Venus and Mercury there exists a difference of opinion among the early mathematicians about whether they are above the sun or below the sun.[4] For there is no demonstration proving to us what the position of these two spheres[5] is. The doctrine of all the ancients was that the spheres of Venus and Mercury are above the sun. Know this and keep it entirely present in your mind. Then Ptolemy came and decided in favor of the opinion that they were both below the sun, saying that the greatest likeness to a natural order would be manifested in the sun's being in the middle with three planets[6] above and three below. Then came latter-day groups of people in Andalusia[7] who became very proficient in mathematics and explained, conforming to Ptolemy's premises, that Venus and Mercury were above the sun. In fact, | Ibn Aflaḥ of Sevilla,[8] whose son I have met, has written a celebrated book about this. Thereupon the excellent philosopher Abū Bakr Ibn al-Ṣaʾigh,[9] under the guidance of one of whose pupils I have read texts, reflected on this notion and showed various ways of argumentation — transcribed by us from him — by means of

1. Or: one. 2. B.T., Ḥagigah, 12b. 3. Deut. 10:14.
4. On the theories concerned, cf. Translator's Introduction.
5. Maimonides does not use here and in the following sentence the usual astronomical term *falak* occurring in the preceding sentence, but the term *kurra* which likewise signifies "sphere" or "globe." Sometimes the term *kurra*, as used by Maimonides, comprehends several spheres.
6. Literally: stars. 7. Or: Spain. The Arabic word is *Andalus*.
8. Jābir Ibn Aflaḥ, an astonomer of the twelfth century, is meant.
9. Cf. I 74, n. 10.

which the opinion that Venus and Mercury are above the sun may be shown to be improbable. However, the argument set forth by Abū Bakr is one purporting to show that this opinion is improbable, not one purporting to disprove in entirely. Whether this matter be so or not, all the early mathematicians put Venus and Mercury above the sun. For this reason they counted five spheres:[10] namely, the sphere of the moon, which undoubtedly is contiguous with us; that of the sun, which is necessarily above it; that of the five planets; that of the fixed stars; and the all-encompassing sphere[11] in which there are no stars. Accordingly, the number of informed spheres,[12] I mean to say the spheres with forms, in which there are stars—for as is generally known from their books, the ancients called the stars forms—is four; namely, the sphere of the fixed stars, that of the five planets, that of the sun, and that of the moon; while above all of them there is one empty sphere[13] in which there is no star.

Now this number is for me a very important basis for a notion that has occurred to me and that I have not seen explicitly stated by any philosopher. I found, however, in the dicta of the philosophers and the discourse of the *Sages* indications that drew my attention to it. I shall accordingly mention them and explain the notion in the following chapter. |

CHAPTER 10

It is known and generally recognized in all the books of the philosophers speaking of governance that the governance of this lower world—I mean the world of generation and corruption—is said to be brought about through the forces overflowing from the spheres.[1] We have mentioned this several times, and you will find likewise that the *Sages* say:[2] *There is not a single herb below that has not a "mazzal"*[3] *in the firmament that beats upon it and tells it to grow. For it is said: Knowest thou the ordinances of*

10. *kurra*. Cf. n. 5, this chap. 11. *falak*. Cf. n. 5, this chap.
12. *kurra*. 13. *falak*.

1. The Arabic sentence is grammatically incorrect. It may be interpreted as saying that what is generally known is not the governance of this lower world, etc., but that all philosophers say these things about it.
2. Genesis Rabbah, X.
3. The most frequent meaning of this Hebrew word is "a constellation in the zodiac"; but as Maimonides points out in the next sentence, it may also mean "star."

the heavens? Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth?[4] Now they also call a *star: mazzal.* You will find this clearly in the beginning of *Bereshith Rabbah* in the same passage. For they say: *There is a "mazzal" that completes its motion in thirty days, and there is a "mazzal" that completes its motion in thirty years.*[5] By means of this dictum[6] they have made it clear that even individuals subject to generation have forces of the stars that are specially assigned to them. And though all the forces of the sphere pervade all the existents, yet there also exists a force specially assigned to a certain species—as is the case with regard to the forces of a single body—inasmuch as all that exists is, as we have mentioned, a single individual.

The philosophers have likewise mentioned that the moon has an additional force specially assigned to the element of water. The proof for this consists in the increase of the seas and the rivers due to the increase of the moon and in their decrease due to the latter's decrease, as well as in the fact that the flow of the seas comes with the advance of the moon and its ebb with its retrogression—I mean to say with its ascending and descending in the several quarters of the sphere, as is clear and manifest to whoever has observed this. As | for the fact that the rays of the sun set in motion the element of fire, it is very manifest, as you may see from the fact that heat going together with the sun interpenetrates that which exists and that cold becomes preponderant when the sun gets farther from a place on the earth or is hidden in relation to it. This is too clear to be dwelt upon at length. In consequence, when I knew this, it occurred to me that while the four spheres[7] having stars have forces that overflow from them as a whole toward all the things subject to generation—these spheres being the causes of the latter—each sphere is also specially assigned to one of the four elements, the sphere being the principle from which the forces of that particular element exclusively derive and that in virtue of its motion causes the element to move in the motion of generation.[8] Thus the sphere of the moon moves the water, the sphere of the sun the fire, while the sphere of the other planets moves the air. It is because of the multiplicity of the motions of these planets[9]—their differences, their retrogressions, their direct progressions, and their stations—that the shapes of the air, its differences, and its rapid contractions and expansions are multiple. The

4. Job 38:33. 5. Genesis Rabbah, X.
6. The reference is to the first passage from Genesis Rabbah quoted in this chapter.
7. *kurra* is used, and not the more usual astronomical term *falak;* cf. preceding chap., n. 5.
8. According to Aristotelian terminology, the process of generation is a motion.
9. Or: of this sphere. Literally: of their motions.

sphere of the fixed stars moves the earth. Perhaps the earth is so sluggish in moving to receive the action being brought to bear upon it and in undergoing combinations because of the slowness of the fixed stars in their motion. [The Sages] gave an indication of the fixed stars' being specially assigned to the earth in their saying that the number of the species of plants is the same as the number of the individual stars belonging to the totality of stars.

It is likewise possible that the arrangement of the universe should be as follows. The spheres are four; the elements moved by the spheres are four; and the forces proceeding from the spheres into that which exists in general are four, as we have made clear. Similarly the causes of every motion belonging to the sphere are four: namely, the shape of the sphere—I mean to say its sphericity;[10] its soul; and its intellect through which it has conceptions, as we have explained; and the | separate intellect, which is its beloved. Understand this well. The explanation of this is as follows. Were the shape of the sphere not that particular shape, it would not be at all possible for it to be moved in a circular continuous motion. For a continuity of a motion combined with a return to the same places is only possible in circular motion. For in the case of rectilinear motion, the motion is not continuous even if the moving object should return and cross the same distance several times. For between two motions in opposite directions there is an interval of rest, as has been demonstrated in the appropriate place. Accordingly it is clear that for the continuity of a motion in which there are returns over the same distance it is necessary that the moving object should move in a circular motion. Now only an object endowed with a soul has motion. Accordingly the existence of the soul follows necessarily. There must also indubitably be something inciting to motion, namely, a conceiving and a desire for that which has been conceived, as we have mentioned. This can only come about there through an intellect, for it cannot consist in the avoidance of what disagrees with one or the seeking of what agrees with one. Thus there must indubitably be a certain being of which a conception is made and for which there is desire, as we have explained.

There are thus four causes of the motion of the sphere and four sorts of general forces proceeding from it toward us. These are, as we have explained, the force causing the generation of the minerals, the force of the vegetative soul, the force of the animal soul, and the force of the rational soul. Now if you consider the activities of these forces, you will find that

10. The Arabic term for "sphere" used in this sentence is *falak*. The term for "sphericity" derives from another root and is *kurriyya*. Cf. preceding chap., n. 5.

they are of two species. For they cause either the generation of all that is generated or the preservation of what is generated—I mean to say the preservation of its species in a permanent way and the preservation of its individuals for a certain duration. This is the meaning of "nature," which is said to be wise, having governance, caring for the bringing into existence of animals by means of an art similar to that of a craftsman, and also caring for their preservation and permanence through the bringing into existence of formative forces, which are the cause of the existence of living beings, and | nutritive forces, which are the cause of their lasting for whatever duration is possible. What is intended hereby is the divine decree[11] from which these two activities derive through the intermediary of the sphere.

This number four is wondrous and should be an object of reflection. They said in *Midrash Rabbi Tanḥuma:*[12] *How many steps were in the ladder? Four*—which refers to the dictum: *And behold a ladder set up on the earth.*[13] And in all the *Midrashim*[14] it is mentioned and repeated that *there are four camps of angels.*[15] However, in some manuscripts I have seen the text: *How many steps were in the ladder? Seven.* But all the manuscripts and all the *Midrashim*[16] agree that *the angels of God*, whom [Jacob] saw *ascending and descending* were only four and not any other number—*two ascending and two descending*—and that the four gathered together upon one step of the *ladder*, all four being in one row—namely, the two who *ascend* and the two who *descend.* They even learned from this that the breadth of the *ladder* seen *in the vision of prophecy* was equal to the dimension of the world plus one third. For the breadth of one *angel in the vision of prophecy* is equal to the dimension of one third of the world according to the dictum: *And his body was like tarshish.*[17] Accordingly the breadth of the four is equal to that of the world plus one third. In his parables, *Zechariah*—when describing that *there came out four chariots from between the two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of brass*[18]—says in interpretation of this: *these are the four airs*[19] *of the heavens which go forth after presenting themselves before the Lord of all*

11. Or: the divine thing.
12. The passage does not occur in the text of Midrash Tanḥuma known to us. Cf. Yalqut Reubeni, Mal'akh, 99.
13. Gen. 28:12. 14. In the text: *Midrashoth.*
15. Cf. Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, IV; Numbers Rabbah, II.
16. In the text: *Midrashoth.* 17. Dan. 10:6. 18. Zech. 6:1.
19. *ruḥoth.* According to Maimonides, the word *ruaḥ* has as its primary signification "air." Ordinarily it is translated "wind" or "spirit."

the earth.[20] They are accordingly the cause of everything that comes to pass in time. In regard to his mentioning *brass* and likewise the dictum *burnished brass*,[21] perceive in them a certain equivocality. You shall hear an indication regarding this. As for their dictum that an *angel* is equal in breadth to a third of the world – namely, their dictum in *Bereshith Rabbah*, which reads textually: *That the angel is the third part of the world*[22] – it is | very clear. And we have explained it in our great compilation on the legalistic study of the Law.[23] For all created things are divided into three parts: the separate intellects, which are the *angels*; the second, the bodies of the spheres; the third, first matter – I mean the bodies subject to constant change, which are beneath the sphere.

In this way will he who wants to understand the prophetic riddles understand them. And he will awaken from the sleep of negligence, be saved from the sea of ignorance, and rise up toward the high ones. He, however, who is pleased to swim in the seas of his ignorance and *comes down lower and lower*,[24] has no need to weary his body and his heart. When he ceases moving, he goes down to what is lowest in nature. Understand all that has been mentioned and reflect on it.

CHAPTER 11

Know with regard to the astronomical matters mentioned that if an exclusively mathematical-minded man reads and understands them, he will think that they form a cogent demonstration that the form and number of the spheres is as stated. Now things are not like this, and this is not what is sought in the science of astronomy. Some of these matters are indeed founded on the demonstration that they are that way. Thus it has been demonstrated that the path of the sun is inclined against the equator. About this there is no doubt. But there has been no demonstration whether the sun has an eccentric sphere or an epicycle. Now the master of astronomy does not mind this, for the object of that science is to suppose as a hypothesis an arrangement[1] that renders it possible for the motion of the star to be

20. Zech. 6:5. 21. Ezek. 1:7. 22. Genesis Rabbah, LXVIII.
23. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, Yesodei ha-Torah, II 3. 24. An allusion to Deut. 28:43.
1. *hay'a*. Literally: shape. The word also means "astronomy" and is used in this sense by Maimonides in the present chapter.

uniform[2] and circular with no acceleration or deceleration or change in it and to have | the inferences necessarily following from the assumption of that motion agree with what is observed. At the same time the astronomer seeks, as much as possible, to diminish motions and the number of the spheres. For if we assume, for instance, that we suppose as a hypothesis an arrangement by means of which the observations regarding the motions of one particular star can be accounted for through the assumption of three spheres,[3] and another arrangement by means of which the same observations are accounted for through the assumption of four spheres,[4] it is preferable for us to rely on the arrangement postulating the lesser number of motions. For this reason we have chosen in the case of the sun the hypothesis of eccentricity, as Ptolemy mentions, rather than that of an epicycle. In accordance with this purpose and in view of the fact that we have apprehended that the motions of all the fixed stars constitute one immutable motion in which the relative positions of these stars do not change, we are confident that all of them are situated in one sphere. Now it is not impossible that every fixed star is situated in a sphere of its own, while the motions of these stars are one and the same — all of these spheres being situated on the same poles. In that case the number of the intellects would be equal to that of the stars, as is said: *Is there any number of His armies?*[5] — he means because of their multiplicity. For the intellects, the heavenly bodies, and all forces are all together *His armies*. However, there is no doubt that their species may be numbered.

Thus even on this hypothesis, our ordering of the universe in which we counted the sphere[6] of the fixed stars as one sphere[7] — just as we have counted the five spheres[8] of the planets, in spite of the multiplicity of their spheres,[9] as one sphere[10] — would not be disarranged. For, as you have understood, our purpose is to count all the forces that we have apprehended in a general way in that which exists without troubling to give a precise account of the true reality of the intellects and the spheres. For the whole intended purpose is to show that the existents that are below the Creator, may He be exalted, | are divided into three parts: one of them being constituted by the separate intellects; the second, by the bodies of the

2. Literally: one.
3. Literally: with which the seen of the motions of this star is true in virtue of three spheres.
4. Literally: with which the selfsame is true in virtue of four spheres.
5. Job 25:3. 6. The word used is *falak*. Cf. II 9, n. 5.
7. The word used is *kurra*. Cf. II 9, n. 5.
8. *falak*. 9. *falak*. 10. *kurra*.

spheres, which bodies are substrata to permanent forms in such a way that a form subsisting in them does not go over from one substratum to another and that a substratum is immutable in its essence; and the third, by the bodies subject to generation and corruption, which have one matter in common. It is further to show that governance overflows from the deity, may He be exalted, to the intellects according to their rank; that from the benefits received by the intellects, good things and lights overflow to the bodies of the spheres; and that from the spheres – because of the greatness of the benefits they have received from their principles – forces and good things overflow to this body subject to generation and corruption.

Know that in the case of every being that causes a certain good thing to overflow from it according to this order of rank, the existence, the purpose, and the end of the being conferring the benefits, do not consist in conferring the benefits on the recipient. For pure absurdity necessarily would follow from this assumption. For the end is nobler than the things that subsist for the sake of the end. It would, however, necessarily follow from the above-mentioned assumption that the existence of what is the highest, the most perfect, and the most noble, is for the sake of what is inferior. No one who is intelligent can imagine this. The matter is rather as I shall describe it. In effect a thing that is perfect in some kind of perfection sometimes possesses this perfection within such limits that it perfects the thing itself; perfection does not, however, pass over from it to something else. Sometimes its perfection is within such limits that a residue of perfection is left over from it for something else. It is as if you said, by way of example, that there is an individual who has wealth sufficing only for his own necessities, no residue being left over from it from which someone else might receive a benefit; and that there is another individual who has enough wealth for a residue to be left over from it sufficient for the enrichment of many people, so that this one may give a measure of it to another individual through which | this second would also become rich, while a residue is left over from it that suffices for the enrichment of a third individual. The case of being is similar. For the overflow coming from Him, may He be exalted, for the bringing into being of separate intellects overflows likewise from these intellects, so that one of them brings another one into being and this continues up to the Active Intellect. With the latter, the bringing into being of separate intellects comes to an end.

Moreover a certain other act of bringing into being overflows from every separate intellect until the spheres come to an end with the sphere of

the moon. After it there is the body subject to generation and corruption, I mean the first matter and what is composed of it. Furthermore, forces from every sphere enter the elements until their overflow is completed with the completion of generation and corruption.

We have already explained that all these views do not contradict anything said by our prophets and the sustainers of our Law. For our community[11] is a community that is full of knowledge and is perfect, as He, may He be exalted, has made clear through the intermediary of the Master who made us perfect, saying: *Surely, this great community is a wise and understanding people.*[12] However, when the wicked from among the ignorant[13] communities ruined our good qualities, destroyed our words of wisdom and our compilations, and caused our men of knowledge to perish, so that we again became ignorant, as we had been threatened because of our sins – for it says: *And the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid;*[14] when, furthermore, we mingled with these communities and their opinions were taken over by us, as were their morals and actions – for just as it says regarding the similarity of actions: *They mingled themselves with the communities and learned their works,*[15] it says with regard to the adoption by us of the opinions of the ignorant: *And they please themselves in the children of strangers,*[16] which is translated[17] by *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him: *And they walk according to the laws of the gentiles;* when, in consequence of all this, we grew up accustomed to the opinions of the ignorant, these philosophic views appeared to be, as it were, foreign to our Law, just as they are foreign to the opinions of the ignorant. | However, matters are not like this.

As the overflow from the deity and from the intellects has been mentioned repeatedly in our discourse, we must explain to you its true reality, I mean that of the subject that is designated as overflow. After that I shall start upon the discourse concerning the world's being produced in time.

11. *milla*. The word also means "nation." 12. Deut. 4:6.

13. *jāhiliyya*. The word derives from the verb *jahila* (to be ignorant), and is applied ordinarily to the pre-Islamic Arabs because of their paganism. Certainly Maimonides did not wish to suppress this shade of meaning when speaking a little further on of the Jews of his day having become *jāhiliyya*. However, the biblical verse that follows refers to their ignorance, and for this reason the translation "ignorant" was chosen, even though it does not render an essential element of the meaning. It should be borne in mind that whenever the term "ignorant" appears in this paragraph, it corresponds to *jāhiliyya* in the Arabic text.

14. Isa. 29:14. 15. Ps. 106:35. 16. Isa. 2:6. 17. Into Aramaic.

CHAPTER 12

It is clear that everything produced in time has of necessity an efficient cause that causes it to be produced after not having been existent. This proximate agent must either be a body or not a body. A body, however, does not act through being a body; rather does it accomplish a particular act through being a particular body. I mean through its form. I shall speak about this in what shall come after.

This proximate agent, which produces in time the thing that is produced in time, may itself also be produced in time. This, however, cannot go on to infinity. For of necessity there is no doubt for us that, if there is a thing produced in time, we finally must come to something eternal and not produced in time that has caused that thing to be produced in time. Accordingly the question remains why it has produced the thing at one particular moment and not before, as it itself was existent before. Now of necessity there can be no doubt that the impossibility that the act produced in time could come about before it was produced is due either to the absence of a certain relation between the agent and the object of the action—if the agent is a body—or to the absence of the requisite preparation of matter—if the agent is not a body. All these preliminary remarks are in accordance with what in natural speculation is established as an obligatory doctrine, without any attention being given at present to the question of the eternity of the world or its being produced in time. For that is not the subject of the present chapter.

It has been made clear in natural science that every | body that acts in some manner upon another body does this only through encountering it or through encountering something that encounters it, if this agent acts through intermediaries. For instance, this particular body, which at present has grown hot, was heated either because a body of fire had encountered it or because fire had heated the air and the air surrounding that particular body had heated it; thus the proximate agent that has heated that particular body is the hot air. Even a magnet exerts an attraction upon iron at a distance through a force, spreading out from it in the air, which encounters the iron. For this reason this particular fire does not exert an attraction at every distance, whatever that may be, but only at a distance in which the air between it and the thing heated undergoes a change through the instrumentality of the force of the fire. If, however, the

air heated by that fire[1] stops short and does not reach a candle, the latter is not melted by the heat. This is the case also with regard to what attracts. Now something that was not hot and then grew hot must necessarily be provided with a cause produced in time that caused it to be heated. This might be either a fire produced in time or one that had been at a certain distance from that particular object. In that case that distance was subsequently changed; and consequently a relation between the fire and the heated object, which had been nonexistent, was produced in time. Similarly we shall find that the causes of everything that, within that which exists, is produced in time is the mixture of the elements, which are bodies acting upon one another and acted upon by one another. I mean to say that the cause of the production of that which is produced in time is the nearness of a body to a body or the remoteness of a body from a body. As for the things produced in time that we find are not consequent upon the mixture of the elements, namely all the forms, they also must indubitably have an agent—I mean the giver of the form, which giver is not a body. For the agent that produces the form is another form, which is not in matter, as | has been explained in various passages in which this explanation was appropriate. We also have drawn attention to the proof for this in what has preceded.[2] This also can be made clear to you through the fact that every mixture of elements is capable of receiving an increase and a decrease and is produced gradually, whereas the forms are not like this, for they are not produced gradually. Accordingly there is no motion in them. They invariably are produced or pass away in no time. Accordingly they do not come about through the action of the mixture, but the mixture only prepares matter for the reception of the form, whereas the agent that produces the form is a thing that is not capable of being divided, for that which is produced by its act belongs to the same species as itself. Hence it is clear that the agent that produces a form—I mean to say its giver—must of necessity be a form, namely, one that is separate. Now it is absurd that any preference accorded by this agent, which is not a body, should be due to a certain relation.[3] For it is not a body and accordingly cannot draw near or recede or have a body draw near to or recede from it, for there is no relation of distance between a body and that which is not a body. Accordingly the cause of the nonexistence of a particular action[4] is the nonexistence of the preparation of that particular matter to receive the action of the separate

1. Literally: the heat of the air from that fire. 2. Cf. II 4.
3. A relation between the agent and what it acts upon is meant.
4. An action of the above-mentioned agent is meant.

agent. Accordingly it has become clear that the action of bodies upon one another, in respect of their forms, necessitates the preparation of the various kinds of matter with a view to the reception of the act of that which is not a body, these acts being the forms. Considering that the effects produced by the separate intellect are clear and manifest in that which exists – being everything that is produced anew, but does not result solely from the mixture of elements itself – it is necessarily known that this agent does not act either through immediate contact or at some particular distance, for it is not a body. Hence the action of the separate intellect is always designated as an overflow, being likened to a source of water that overflows in all directions and does not have one particular direction from which it draws while giving its bounty to others. For it springs forth from all directions and | constantly irrigates all the directions nearby and afar. Similarly the intellect in question may not be reached by a force coming from a certain direction and from a certain distance; nor does the force of that intellect reach that which is other than itself from one particular direction, at one particular distance, or at one particular time rather than another. For its action is constant as long as something has been prepared so that it is receptive of the permanently existing action, which has been interpreted as an overflow. Similarly with regard to the Creator, may His name be sublime; inasmuch as it had been demonstrated that He is not a body and had been established that the universe is an act of His and that He is its efficient cause – as we have explained and shall explain – it has been said that the world derives from the overflow of God and that He has caused to overflow to it everything in it that is produced in time. In the same way it is said that He caused His knowledge to overflow to the prophets. The meaning of all this is that these actions are the action of one who is not a body. And it is His action that is called overflow.

This term, I mean "overflow," is sometimes also applied in Hebrew to God, may He be exalted, with a view to likening Him to an overflowing spring of water, as we have mentioned. For nothing is more fitting as a simile to the action of one that is separate from matter than this expression, I mean "overflow." For we are not capable of finding the true reality of a term that would correspond to the true reality of the notion. For the mental representation of the action of one who is separate from matter is very difficult, in a way similar to the difficulty of the mental representation of the existence of one who is separate from matter. For just as the imagination cannot represent to itself an existent other than a body or a force in a body, the imagination cannot represent to itself an action taking place otherwise

than through the immediate contact of an agent or at a certain distance and from one particular direction. Accordingly when it was established as true among some belonging to the multitude that the deity is not a body or that He does not draw near to that which He does,[5] they imagined that He gives commands to the angels and that they accomplish the actions in question through immediate contact and the drawing near of one body to another, as | we do with regard to what we act upon. They also imagined that the angels were bodies. Some[6] of them believe that He, may He be exalted, gives a command to a particular thing by means of speech similar to our speech – I mean through the instrumentality of letters and sounds – and that in consequence that thing is affected. All this follows imagination, which is also in true reality the *evil impulse*. For every deficiency of reason or character is due to the action of the imagination or consequent upon its action.

This, however, is not the object of this chapter, for its purpose is to understand the notion of overflow used with regard to God and the intellects, I mean to say the angels, because of their not being bodies. It also is said with regard to the forces of the spheres that they overflow toward that which exists. Thus the overflow of the sphere is spoken of, though its actions proceed from a body. Hence the stars act at some particular distances; I refer to their nearness to or remoteness from the center or their relation to one another.[7] From there astrology[8] comes in.

As for our remark that the books of the prophets likewise apply figuratively the notion of overflow to the action of the deity, a case in point is the dictum, *They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters*[9] – which refers to the overflow of life, that is, of being, which is life without any doubt. Similarly the dictum, *For with Thee is the fountain of life*,[10] signifies the overflow of being. In the same way the remaining portion of this verse, *In Thy light do we see light*, has the selfsame meaning – namely, that through the overflow of the intellect that has overflowed from Thee, we intellectually cognize, and consequently we receive correct guidance, we draw inferences, and we apprehend the intellect. Understand this. |

5. Or: "makes," or "acts." 6. Or: one. 7. I.e., with regard to position in space.
8. Literally: the judgments of the stars. 9. Jer. 2:13. 10. Ps. 36:10.

CHAPTER 13

There are three opinions of human beings, namely, of all those who believe that there is an existent deity, with regard to the eternity of the world or its production in time.

The first opinion, which is the opinion of all who believe in the Law of *Moses our Master, peace be on him*, is that the world as a whole – I mean to say, every existent other than God, may He be exalted – was brought into existence by God after having been purely and absolutely nonexistent, and that God, may He be exalted, had existed alone, and nothing else – neither an angel nor a sphere nor what subsists within the sphere. Afterwards, through His will and His volition, He brought into existence out of nothing all the beings as they are, time itself being one of the created things. For time is consequent upon motion, and motion is an accident in what is moved. Furthermore, what is moved – that is, that upon the motion of which time is consequent – is itself created in time and came to be after not having been. Accordingly one's saying: God "was" before He created the world – where the word "was" is indicative of time – and similarly all the thoughts that are carried along in the mind regarding the infinite duration of His existence before the creation of the world, are all of them due to a supposition regarding time or to an imagining of time and not due to the true reality of time. For time is indubitably an accident. According to us it is one of the created accidents, as are blackness and whiteness. And though it does not belong to the species[1] of quality, it is nevertheless, generally stated, an accident necessarily following upon motion, as is made clear to whoever has understood the discourse of Aristotle on the elucidation of time and on the true reality of its existence.

We shall expound here a notion | that, though it does not belong to the purpose that we pursue, is useful with regard to it. This notion is as follows. What caused the nature of time to be hidden from the majority of the men of knowledge so that that notion perplexed them – like Galen[2] and others – and made them wonder whether or not time had a true reality in that which exists, is the fact that time is an accident subsisting in an accident. For the accidents that have a primary existence in bodies, as for instance colors and tastes, can be understood at the outset and a mental representation can be had of their notions. But the nature of the accidents

1. *naw*ᶜ in Arabic. One would have expected a term signifying genus or category.
2. Galen's views on time are known from various quotations.

whose substrata are other accidents, as for instance the glint of a color and the curve and circularity of a line, is most hidden – more particularly if, in addition, the accident that serves as a substratum has no permanent state, but passes from one state to another. For in consequence the matter becomes even more hidden. In time both characteristics are conjoined. For it is an accident concomitant with motion, the latter being an accident in that which is moved. Moreover, motion has not the status of blackness and whiteness, which constitute a permanent state. For the true reality and substance of motion consist in its not remaining in the same state even for the duration of the twinkling of an eye. This accordingly is what has rendered it necessary for the nature of time to be hidden. The purpose however is that, according to us, time is a created and generated thing as are the other accidents and the substances serving as substrata to these accidents. Hence God's bringing the world into existence does not have a temporal beginning, for time is one of the created things. Consider this matter thoroughly. For thus you will not be necessarily attached to objections from which there is no escape for him who does not know it. For if you affirm as true the existence of time prior to the world, you are necessarily bound to believe in the eternity [of the world]. For time is an accident which necessarily must have a substratum. Accordingly it follows necessarily that there existed some thing prior to the existence of this world existing now. But this notion must be avoided.

This | is one of the opinions.[3] And it is undoubtedly a basis of the Law of *Moses our Master*, peace be on him. And it is second to the basis that is the belief in the unity [of God]. Nothing other than this should come to your mind. It was *Abraham our Father, peace be on him*, who began to proclaim in public this opinion to which speculation had led him. For this reason, he made his proclamation *in the Name of the Lord, God of the world;*[4] he had also explicitly stated this opinion in saying: *Maker of heaven and earth.*[5]

The second opinion is that of all the philosophers of whom we have heard reports and whose discourses we have seen. They say that it is absurd that God would bring a thing into existence out of nothing. Furthermore,

3. I.e., one of the three opinions mentioned above concerning the eternity a parte ante of the world or its production in time.
4. Gen. 21:33. This is the invocation with which Maimonides begins each of the three parts of *The Guide of the Perplexed*. As has been stated in the notes, the correct translation is "God of Eternity." However, in current Hebrew the word *ʿolam* (eternity) very often means "world." This is clearly the signification that Maimonides has in mind here.
5. Gen. 14 22.

according to them, it is likewise not possible that a thing should pass away into nothing; I mean to say that it is not possible that a certain being, endowed with matter and form, should be generated out of the absolute nonexistence of that matter, or that it should pass away into the absolute nonexistence of that matter. To predicate of God that He is able to do this is, according to them, like predicating of Him that He is able to bring together two contraries in one instant of time, or that He is able to create something that is like Himself, may He be exalted, or to make Himself corporeal, or to create a square whose diagonal is equal to its side, and similar impossibilities. What may be understood from their discourse is that they say that just as His not bringing impossible things into existence does not argue a lack of power on His part—since what is impossible has a firmly established nature that is not produced by an agent and that consequently cannot be changed—it likewise is not due to lack of power on His part that He is not able to bring into existence a thing out of nothing, for this belongs to the class of all the impossible things. Hence they believe that there exists a certain matter that is eternal as the deity is eternal; and that He does not exist without it, nor does it exist without Him. They do not believe that it has the same rank in what exists as He, may He be exalted, but that He is the cause of its existence; and that it has the same relation toward Him as, for instance, clay has toward a potter | or iron toward a smith; and that He creates in it whatever He wishes. Thus He sometimes forms out of it a heaven and an earth, and sometimes He forms out of it something else. The people holding this opinion believe that the heaven too is subject to generation and passing-away, but that it is not generated out of nothing and does not pass away into nothing. For it is generated and passes away just as the individuals that are animals are generated from existent matter and pass away into existent matter. The generation and passing-away of the heaven is thus similar to that of all the other existents that are below it.

The people belonging to this sect are in their turn divided into several sects. But it is useless to mention their various sects and opinions in this Treatise. However, the universal principle held by this sect is identical with what I have told you. This is also the belief of Plato. For you will find that Aristotle in the "Akroasis"[6] relates of him that he, I mean Plato, believed that the heaven is subject to generation and passing-away. And you likewise will find his doctrine plainly set forth in his book to Timaeus.[7] But he does not believe what we believe, as is thought by him who does not examine

6. Cf. *Physics* viii.1.251b17 ff.
7. On the Arabic interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*, cf. Translator's Introduction.

opinions and is not precise in speculation; he [the interpreter] imagines that our opinion and his [Plato's] opinion are identical. But this is not so. For as for us, we believe that the heaven was generated out of nothing after a state of absolute nonexistence, whereas he believes that it has come into existence and has been generated from some other thing. This then is the second opinion.

The third opinion is that of Aristotle, his followers, and the commentators of his books. He asserts what also is asserted by the people belonging to the sect that has just been mentioned, namely, that something endowed with matter can by no means be brought into existence out of that which has no matter. He goes beyond this by saying that the heaven is in no way subject to generation and passing-away. His opinion on this point may be summed up as follows. He thinks that this being as a whole, such as it is, has never ceased to be and will never do so; | that the permanent thing not subject to generation and passing-away, namely, the heaven, likewise does not cease to be; that time and motion are perpetual and everlasting and not subject to generation and passing-away; and also that the thing subject to generation and passing-away, namely, that which is beneath the sphere of the moon, does not cease to be. I mean to say that its first matter is not subject in its essence to generation and passing-away, but that various forms succeed each other in it in such a way that it divests itself of one form and assumes another. He thinks furthermore that this whole higher and lower order cannot be corrupted and abolished, that no innovation can take place in it that is not according to its nature, and that no occurrence that deviates from what is analogous to it can happen in it in any way. He asserts—though he does not do so textually, but this is what his opinion comes to—that in his opinion it would be an impossibility that will should change in God or a new volition arise in Him; and that all that exists has been brought into existence, in the state in which it is at present, by God through His volition; but that it was not produced after having been in a state of nonexistence. He thinks that just as it is impossible that the deity should become nonexistent or that His essence should undergo a change, it is impossible that a volition should undergo a change in Him or a new will arise in Him. Accordingly it follows necessarily that this being as a whole has never ceased to be as it is at present and will be as it is in the future eternity.[8]

This is a summary and the truth of these opinions. They are the opinions of those according to whom the existence of the deity for this world

8. Or: the future time.

has been demonstrated. Those who have no knowledge of the existence of the deity, may He be held sublime and honored, but think that things are subject to generation and passing-away through conjunction and separation due to chance and that there is no one who governs and orders being, are Epicurus, his following, and those like him, as is related by Alexander.[9] It is useless for us to mention these sects. | For the existence of the deity has already been demonstrated, and there can be no utility in our mentioning the opinions of groups of people who built their doctrine upon a foundation the reverse of which has been demonstrated as true. Similarly it is useless for us to wish to prove as true the assertion of the people holding the second opinion, I mean that according to which the heaven is subject to generation and passing-away. For they believe in eternity; and there is, in our opinion, no difference between those who believe that heaven must of necessity be generated from a thing and pass away into a thing or the belief of Aristotle who believed that it is not subject to generation and corruption. For the purpose of every follower of the Law of *Moses and Abraham our Father* or of those who go the way of these two is to believe that there is nothing eternal in any way at all existing simultaneously with God; to believe also that the bringing into existence of a being out of nonexistence is for the deity not an impossibility, but rather an obligation, as is deemed likewise by some[10] of the men of speculation.

After we have expounded those opinions, I shall begin to explain and summarize the proofs of Aristotle in favor of his opinion and the motive that incited him to adopt it.

CHAPTER 14

I do not need to repeat in every chapter that I compiled this Treatise for your benefit only because of my knowledge of your achievements. I do not need to set forth in every passage the text of the discourse of the philosophers, but only their intentions. I shall not write at length, but only draw your attention to the methods that they aim at, as I did for you regarding the opinions of the Mutakallimūn. I shall pay no attention to anyone who besides Aristotle has engaged in speculative discourse, for it is his opinions that ought to be considered. And if there are good grounds for refuting him or raising doubt with regard to these opinions as to some point on which

9. On this reference to Alexander of Aphrodisias, cf. Translator's Introduction. 10. Or: one.

we make a refutation or | raise doubts, these grounds will be even firmer and stronger with respect to all the others who disagreed with the fundamental principles of the Law.

I say then that Aristotle asserts that motion is not subject to generation and passing-away—he means motion in the absolute sense. For he says that if a motion is produced in time, it should be considered that everything that is produced in time is preceded by a certain motion, namely, that consisting in its passage to actuality and its being produced after it had been nonexistent. Consequently a motion exists, namely, the motion by means of which the latter motion was brought into being. Consequently the first motion must of necessity be eternal or else the series will go on to infinity. Likewise in conformity with this principle, he asserts furthermore that time is not subject to generation and passing-away. For time is consequent upon, and attached to, motion, and there is no motion except in time; and again time cannot be intellectually conceived except through motion, as has been demonstrated. This is a method of his by means of which the eternity of the world is necessarily inferred.

A second method of his: He asserts that the first matter, which is common to the four elements, is not subject to generation and passing-away. For if the first matter were subject to generation, it would have to have a matter out of which it would be generated. And it necessarily would follow that the generated matter would have to be endowed with form, for the latter is the true reality of generation. But we have assumed that the matter in question was matter not endowed with form. Now such matter necessarily must not be generated from some thing. It is consequently eternal and not liable to be destroyed. These considerations too render obligatory the eternity of this world.

A third method of his: He asserts that the matter of the heaven as a whole has no contraries, for circular motion has no contrary, as has been made clear; and there are contraries only in rectilinear motion, as has been demonstrated. He asserts further that in everything that passes away, the cause of its passing-away consists in there being contraries in it. Accordingly as there are no contraries in the sphere, it is not subject to passing-away. | Now what is not subject to passing-away is likewise not subject to generation. He thus stated several propositions in an absolute manner and explained them. These propositions are:

Everything that is subject to generation is subject to passing-away.
Everything that is subject to passing-away is subject to generation.

Everything that has not been generated will not pass away.
Everything that will not pass away has not been generated.

This too is a method that renders obligatory the eternity of the world, which he wishes to establish.

A fourth method: He asserts that with respect to everything that is produced in time, the possibility of its being produced precedes in time the production of the thing itself. And similarly with respect to everything that changes, the possibility of its changing precedes in time the change itself. From this premise he made a necessary inference as to the perpetuity of circular motion, its having no end and no beginning. His later followers in their turn made it clear by means of this premise that the world was eternal. They said: Before the world came into being, its production in time must have been either possible or necessary or impossible. Now if it was necessary, the world could not have been nonexistent. If its production in time was impossible, it could not be true that it ever would exist. And if it was possible, what was the substratum for this possibility? For there indubitably must be an existent thing that is the substratum of this possibility and in virtue of which it is said of the thing that it is possible. This is a very powerful method for establishing the eternity of the world. However, an intelligent man from among the later Mutakallimūn thought that he had solved this difficulty. He said: Possibility resides in the agent and not in the thing that is the object of action. This, however, is no reply, for there are two possibilities. For with respect to everything produced in time, the possibility of its being produced precedes in time the thing itself. And similarly in the agent that produced it, there is the possibility to produce that which it has produced before it has done so. These are indubitably two possibilities: a possibility in the matter to become that particular thing, and a possibility in the agent to produce that particular thing. These are the most important of the methods followed by Aristotle in | establishing the eternity of the world by starting from the world itself.

There also are methods set forth by those who came after him, methods that they derived from his philosophy and by which they established the eternity of the world by starting from the deity, may His name be sublime.

One of them is as follows. They say that if God, may His name be sublime, has produced the world in time after its having been nonexistent, God must have been an agent in potentia before He had created the world; and after He had created it, He became an agent in actu. God had therefore

passed over from potentiality to actuality. Consequently there had been in Him, may He be exalted, a certain possibility and there indubitably must have been in His case something that caused Him to pass over from potentiality into actuality. This also is a great difficulty. Every intelligent man ought to reflect concerning its solution and the disclosing of its secret.

Another method. They say: An agent acts at one time and does not act at another only because of the impediments or incentives that may supervene upon him or in him. For the impediments may render necessary the nonaccomplishment of a certain action that the agent wishes to accomplish, and on the other hand the incentives may render necessary a certain wish that the agent did not have before. Now as the Creator, may His name be sublime, has no incentives necessitating the alteration of a will, nor hindrances or impediments that supervene and cease to exist, there is no reason in respect of which He should act at one time and not act at another; but on the contrary His action exists, just as His permanence does, permanently in actu.

Another method. They say: His acts, may He be exalted, are most perfect; there is nothing in them that is a defect; there is nothing in them that is without an object or is supererogatory. This is the notion always reiterated by Aristotle,[1] who says that nature is wise and does not do anything without an object and that it does everything in the most perfect possible way. They say accordingly: It follows from this that the existent in question[2] is the most perfect existent that is and that it does not serve an end beyond it. | Consequently it is necessary that it should perpetually exist, for His wisdom is perpetual, as is His essence; or rather His essence is His wisdom, which has required the existence of this existent.

All the arguments of the believers in the eternity of the world that you may encounter are ramifications of these methods and stem from one of them.

They also say in order to prove that the opposed doctrines are disgraceful: How could the deity, may He be honored and sublime, be idle and not do a thing in any respect whatever or cause a happening to take place in the course of the perdurable pre-eternity, so that whereas He did not do a thing throughout the duration of His existence—which is eternal and unending—He inaugurated that which exists when yesterday came? For if you were to say, for instance, that God created many worlds before this one—their number being that of the mustard seeds required to fill

1. Cf., e.g., *De Caelo* i.4.271a33; *De partibus animalium* iv.13.695b18.
2. I.e., the world.

the globe of the ultimate sphere—and that each of these worlds has remained in existence a number of years equal to that of the mustard seeds required to fill it, this, in respect to its status compared to His infinite existence, may He be exalted, would have been as if you were to say that God created the world yesterday. For as soon as we affirm the inauguration of that which exists after nonexistence, there is no difference between one's positing that this happened hundreds of thousands of years since or at a very recent time. Accordingly this is also a way by means of which those who believe in the eternity of the world prove the incongruity of the opposed doctrines.

They also argue through drawing an inference from what was universally admitted in the past among all nations. For this necessitates that this belief is natural and not conventional and that for this reason there was a general consensus regarding it. Thus Aristotle says:[3] All men explicitly affirm the perpetuity and permanence of the heavens. And when they became aware that they were not subject to coming-about and passing-away, they asserted that they were the dwelling-place of God, may He be exalted, and of the spiritual beings—he means to say, of the angels. They attributed the heavens to Him in order to indicate their perpetuity. He also sets forth other points of this | kind concerning this subject in order to buttress the opinion, which according to him speculation has shown to be true, by means of universally admitted beliefs.

CHAPTER 15

My purpose in this chapter is to make it clear that Aristotle possesses no demonstration for the world being eternal, as he understands this. Moreover he is not mistaken with regard to this. I mean to say that he himself knows that he possesses no demonstration with regard to this point, and that the arguments and the proofs that he sets forth are merely such as occur to the mind and to which the soul inclines. Alexander[1] thinks that they involve a lesser number of doubts. However, Aristotle cannot be

3. Cf. *De Caelo* i.3.270b5 ff. In Guthrie's translation, the passage reads as follows: "All men have a conception of gods, and all assign the highest place to the divine, both barbarians and Hellenes, as many as believe in gods, supposing, obviously, that immortal is closely linked with immortal. It could not, they think, be otherwise."

1. Of Aphrodisias.

supposed to have believed that these statements were demonstrations, for it was Aristotle who taught mankind the methods, the rules, and the conditions of demonstration.

What led me to speak of this is the fact that the latter-day followers of Aristotle believe that Aristotle has demonstrated the eternity of the world. Most of the people who believe themselves to philosophize follow Aristotle as an authority in this question and think that everything that he has mentioned constitutes a cogent demonstration as to which there can be no doubt. They regard it as disgraceful to disagree with him or to suppose that some concealed point or some false imagining in one of the issues has remained hidden from him. For this reason I thought that it was indicated to challenge them with regard to their opinion and to explain to them that Aristotle himself did not claim to have a demonstration in this question. Thus he says in the "Akroasis": All the physicists preceding us believe that motion is not subject to generation and passing-away, except Plato, who believes that motion is subject to generation and passing-away, and | the heaven too according to him is subject to generation and passing-away.[2] This is literally what he says. Now it is certain that if there had been cogent demonstrations with regard to this question, Aristotle would not have needed to buttress his opinion by means of the fact that the physicists who preceded him had the same belief as he. Nor would he have needed to make all the assertions he makes in that passage concerning the vilification of those[3] who disagree with him and the worthlessness of their[4] opinion. For when something has been demonstrated, the correctness of the matter is not increased and certainty regarding it is not strengthened by the consensus of all men of knowledge with regard to it. Nor could its correctness be diminished and certainty regarding it be weakened even if all the people on earth disagreed with it. You will find likewise that Aristotle in "The Heaven and the World," when embarking upon the explanation that the heavens are not subject to generation and passing-away, states:[5] Now after

2. *Physics* viii.1.251b15 ff. The quotation is not exact. 3. Or in the singular.
4. Or in the singular.
5. *De Caelo* i.10.279b4 ff. The two passages quoted by Maimonides read as follows in Guthrie's translation: "Having established so much, let us next decide whether [the world] has been from all time or has had a beginning, and whether it is indestructible or destructible. But first let us run over the theories of others, since to expound one theory is to raise the difficulties involved in its contrary. At the same time also the arguments which are to follow will inspire more confidence if the pleas of those who dispute them have been heard first. It will not look so much as if we are procuring judgment by default. And indeed it is arbiters, not litigants who are wanted for the obtaining of an adequate recognition of the truth." The Arabic translation of *De Caelo* can be shown to be accountable for the differences between Maimonides' quotations and the Greek text. Cf. Translator's Introduction.

this we wish also to investigate the heavens. We shall accordingly say: Do you regard them as generated from some thing, or not; are they liable to pass away or can they not at all pass away? After assuming this question to have been posed, he desired to mention the arguments of those who assert the heavens to be generated, and accordingly continues literally as follows. He says: If we do this,[6] our words will be more acceptable for, and more worthy of approval by, those who proceed correctly in speculation, and more particularly if they have first heard the arguments of those who disagree with us. For if, without mentioning the arguments of those who disagree with us, we only mention our opinion and our arguments, these[7] would appear too weak to be accepted by the listeners. It behooves him who wishes to judge according to the truth not to be hostile to those who disagree with him, but to be friendly to, and equitable toward, them—meting out the same measure in granting that their arguments were correct as he would with regard to his own arguments. This is literally the discourse of the man.

Consequently, O community of people who are engaged in speculation, after this introduction, can any blame remain attached to that man, and can anyone think after reading these words | that he had found a demonstration with regard to this question? For can anyone, much less Aristotle, imagine that the readiness to accept a thing that is demonstrated would be feebler if the arguments of those who disagree with it were not heard first? Moreover, there is the fact that he stated[8] that this doctrine[9] was an opinion and that his proofs[10] in favor of it were mere arguments.

Can Aristotle have been ignorant of the difference between mere arguments and demonstrations, as well as between opinions, which when thought about may be accepted to a greater or lesser extent, and things of demonstration? Furthermore, does one need in demonstration that rhetorical statement, which he has made by way of introduction, that one should be equitable toward the adversary in order to strengthen one's opinion? No; rather his whole purpose is to make it clear that his opinion is more correct than the opinions of those who disagree with him—that is, those who claim that philosophic speculation leads to the belief that the heavens are subject to generation and passing-away, but that they have never been

6. I.e., set forth the arguments of those who believe in the generation of the heavens.
7. Or: our opinion. 8. In the passage just quoted.
9. That of the eternity of the world.
10. Maimonides refers to the term *ḥujaj* used in the Aristotelian passage just quoted. This term does not necessarily imply an absence of cogent demonstration. It only does so if it is opposed, as it is by Maimonides, to the term *burhān* (demonstration).

nonexistent, or that they have been generated but will not pass away, and whatever other of these opinions he mentions. Now this is indubitably correct. For his opinion is nearer to correctness than the opinions of those who disagree with him in so far as inferences are made from the nature of what exists. However, we do not think so,[11] as I shall make clear. But passions get the better of all sects, even of the philosophers. Consequently the latter wish to establish as a fact that Aristotle produced a demonstration with regard to this question. Perhaps, according to their opinion, Aristotle produced a demonstration with regard to this question without being aware of having done so, so that attention was called to this only after him. As for me, I have no doubt that the opinions mentioned by Aristotle with regard to these subjects—I mean such opinions as that concerning the eternity of the world and that concerning the cause of the difference of the motions of the spheres and the ordered arrangement of the intelligences—are none of them provided with a demonstration. And Aristotle never at any time had the fantasy that what he said in this connection constituted a demonstration. On the contrary, he thought, as he says, that the gates of the ways to inferential reasoning | on these matters are closed before us and that we have at our disposition no principle pertaining to them from which to start to draw inferences. You know the text of his words, which reads as follows:[12] As for the matters concerning which we have no argument or that are too great in our opinion, it is difficult for us to say: Why is this so? For instance, when we say: Is the world eternal or not? This is literally what he says. However, you know Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī's] interpretation of this example,[13] what he made clear with regard to it, as well as the fact that he considered disgraceful the notion that Aristotle could have doubted of the eternity of the world. He had an extreme contempt for Galen because of the latter's saying that this was an obscure question with regard to which no demonstration is known. As Abū Naṣr holds, it is clear and manifest, being proved by demonstration, that the heavens are eternal whereas that which is within them is subject to generation and passing-away.

To sum up: Nothing in the methods that we have set forth in this chapter is capable either of establishing an opinion as correct or of proving it false or of arousing doubts with regard to it. And we have advanced the

11. The meaning may be either that Maimonides does not agree with Aristotle's doctrine regarding the eternity of the world or that he does not think that in this matter "inferences from the nature of what exists" should be used as demonstrative proofs.
12. *Topica* i.11.104b15 ff. The quotation is by and large accurate.
13. The passage of al-Fārābī to which reference is made has not yet been identified.

things we have only because we know that the majority of those who consider themselves as perspicacious, even though they have no understanding of anything in the sciences, decide simply that the world is eternal through acceptance of the authority of men celebrated for their science who affirm its eternity, whereas they reject the discourse of all the prophets, because their discourse[14] does not use the method of scientific instruction, but that of imparting reports coming from God. Only a few favored by the intellect have been guided aright through this second method. As for what we desire in regard to the subject of the creation of the world according to the opinion of our Law, I shall speak of it in chapters that will follow. |

CHAPTER 16

This is a chapter in which I shall explain to you what I believe with regard to this question. After that I shall give proofs for what we desire to maintain. I say then with regard to all that is affirmed by those Mutakallimūn who think that they have demonstrated the newness of the world, that I approve of nothing in those proofs and that I do not deceive myself by designating methods productive of errors as demonstrations. If a man claims that he sets out to demonstrate a certain point by means of sophistical arguments, he does not, in my opinion, strengthen assent to the point he intends to prove, but rather weakens it and opens the way for attacks against it. For when it becomes clear that those proofs are not valid, the soul weakens in its assent to what is being proved. It is preferable that a point for which there is no demonstration remain a problem or that one of the two contradictory propositions simply be accepted. I have already set forth for your benefit the methods of the Mutakallimūn in establishing the newness of the world, and I have drawn your attention to the points with regard to which they may be attacked. Similarly all that Aristotle and his followers have set forth in the way of proof of the eternity of the world does not constitute in my opinion a cogent demonstration, but rather arguments subject to grave doubts, as you shall hear. What I myself desire to make clear is that the world's being created in time, according to the opinion of our Law—an opinion that I have already explained—is not

14. I.e., the prophets' discourse.

impossible and that all those philosophic proofs from which it seems that the matter is different from what we have stated, all those arguments have a certain point through which they may be invalidated and the inference drawn from them against us shown to be incorrect. Now inasmuch as this is true in my opinion and inasmuch as this | question—I mean to say that of the eternity of the world or its creation in time—becomes an open question, it should in my opinion be accepted without proof because of prophecy, which explains things to which it is not in the power of speculation to accede. For as we shall make clear, prophecy is not set at nought even in the opinion of those[1] who believe in the eternity of the world.

After I have made it clear that what we maintain is possible, I shall begin to make it prevail[2] likewise, by means of speculative proof, over any other affirmations; I refer to my making prevail the assertion of creation in time over the assertion of eternity. I shall make it clear that just as a certain disgrace attaches to us because of the belief in the creation in time, an even greater disgrace attaches to the belief in eternity. I shall now start to bring into being a method that shall render void the proofs of all those who prove by inference the eternity of the world.

CHAPTER 17

In the case of everything produced in time, which is generated after not having existed—even in those cases in which the matter of the thing was already existent and in the course of the production of the thing had merely put off one and put on another form—the nature of that particular thing after it has been produced in time, has attained its final state, and achieved stability, is different from its nature when it is being generated and is beginning to pass from potentiality to actuality. It is also different from the nature the thing had before it had moved so as to pass from potentiality to actuality. For example, the nature of the feminine seed, which is the blood in the blood vessels, is different from the nature of this seed as it exists in the state of pregnancy after it has encountered the masculine sperm and has begun to move toward the transition from potentiality to actuality. And even at the latter period, its nature is different from the nature of an animal that, after having been born, achieves perfection.

1. Or: of him. 2. Literally: that it outweighs.

No inference can be drawn in any respect from the nature of a thing after it has been generated, has attained its final state, and has achieved stability | in its most perfect state, to the state of that thing while it moved toward being generated. Nor can an inference be drawn from the state of the thing when it moves toward being generated to its state before it begins to move thus. Whenever you err in this and draw an inference from the nature of a thing that has achieved actuality to its nature when it was only in potentia, grave doubts are aroused in you. Moreover, things that must exist become impossible in your opinion, and on the other hand things that are impossible become necessary in your opinion. Assume, according to an example we have made, that a man of a most perfect natural disposition was born and that his mother died after she had suckled him for several months. And the man,[1] alone in an isolated island, took upon himself the entire upbringing of him who was born, until he grew up, became intelligent, and acquired knowledge. Now this child had never seen a woman or a female of one of the species of the other animals. Accordingly he puts a question, saying to a man who is with him: How did we come to exist, and in what way were we generated? Thereupon the man to whom the question was put replied: Every individual among us was generated in the belly of an individual belonging like us to our species, an individual who is female and has such and such a form. Every individual among us was – being small in body – within the belly, was moved and fed there, and grew up little by little – being alive – until it reached such and such limit in size. Thereupon an opening was opened up for him in the lower part of the body, from which he issued and came forth. Thereupon he does not cease growing until he becomes such as you see that we are. Now the orphaned child must of necessity put the question: Did every individual among us – when he was little, contained within a belly, but alive and moving and growing – did he eat, drink, breathe through the mouth and nose, produce excrements? He is answered: No. Thereupon he indubitably will hasten to set this down as a lie and will produce a demonstration that all these true statements are impossible, drawing inferences from | perfect beings that have achieved stability. He will say: If any individual among us were deprived of breath for the fraction of an hour, he would die and his movements would cease. How then can one conceive that an individual among us could be for months within a thick vessel surrounding him, which is within a body, and yet be alive and in motion? If one of us were to swallow a sparrow,

1. According to Ibn Tibbon, the father is meant. However, several Arabic manuscripts have "men," in the plural. This reading is adopted by Ibn Falquera and by Alḥarizi.

that sparrow would die immediately upon entering the stomach, and all the more the underbelly. Every individual among us would undoubtedly perish within a few days if he did not eat food with his mouth and drink water; how then can an individual remain alive for months without eating and drinking? Every individual among us, if he had taken food and had not given off excrements, would die in very great pain within a few days; how then could the individual in question remain for months without giving off excrements? If the belly of one of us were perforated, he would die after some days; how then can it be supposed that the navel of the fetus in question was open? How is it that he does not open his eyes, put out his palms, stretch his feet, while all the parts of his body are whole and have no defect as you thought? Similarly all the analogies[2] will be carried on in order to show that it is in no respect possible that man should be generated in that manner.

Consider this example and reflect upon it, you who are engaged in speculation, and you shall find that this is exactly our position with regard to Aristotle. For we, the community of the followers of *Moses our Master and Abraham our Father*, may peace be on them, believe that the world was generated in such and such manner and came to be in a certain state from another state and was created in a certain state, which came after another state. Aristotle, on the other hand, begins to contradict us and to bring forward against us proofs based on the nature of what exists, a nature that has attained stability, is perfect, and has achieved actuality. As for us, we declare against him that this nature, after it has achieved stability and perfection, does not resemble in anything the state it was in while in the state of being generated, and that it | was brought into existence from absolute nonexistence.[3] Now what argument from among all that he advances holds good against us? For these arguments necessarily concern only those[4] who claim that the stable nature of that which exists, gives an indication of its having been created in time. I have already made it known to you that I do not claim this.

Now I shall go back and set forth for your benefit the principles of his methods and shall show you that nothing in them of necessity concerns us in any respect, since we contend that God brought the world as a whole into existence after nonexistence[5] and formed it until it has achieved perfection as you see it. He said that the first matter is subject to neither

2. In the singular in Arabic. Or: the syllogism.
3. Other possible translations are "privation" and "nothingness."
4. Or in the singular. 5. Cf. n. 3, this chap.

generation nor passing-away and began to draw inferences in favor of this thesis from the things subject to generation and passing-away and to make clear that it was impossible that the first matter was generated. And this is correct. For we do not maintain that the first matter is generated as man is generated from the seed or that it passes away as man passes away into dust. But we maintain that God has brought it into existence from nothing and that after being brought into existence, it was as it is now — I mean everything is generated from it, and everything generated from it passes away into it; it does not exist devoid of form; generation and corruption terminate in it; it is not subject to generation as are the things generated from it, nor to passing-away as are the things that pass away into it, but is created from nothing.[6] And its Creator may, if He wishes to do so, render it entirely and absolutely nonexistent. We likewise say the same thing of motion. For he has inferred from the nature of motion that motion is not subject to generation and passing-away. And this is correct. For we maintain that after motion has come into existence with the nature characteristic of it when it has become stable, one cannot imagine that it should come into being as a whole and perish as a whole, as partial motions come into being and perish. This analogy[7] holds good with regard to everything that is attached | to the nature of motion. Similarly the assertion that circular motion has no beginning is correct. For after the spherical body endowed with circular motion has been brought into being, one cannot conceive that its motion should have a beginning. We shall make a similar assertion with regard to the possibility that must of necessity precede everything that is generated. For this is only necessary in regard to this being that is stabilized — in this being everything that is generated, is generated from some being. But in the case of a thing created from nothing, neither the senses nor the intellect point to something that must be preceded by its possibility. We make a similar assertion with regard to the thesis that there are no contraries in heaven. That thesis is correct. However, we have not claimed that the heavens have been generated as the horse and palm tree are. Nor have we claimed that their being composite renders necessary their passing-away as is the case with plants and animals because of the contraries that subsist in them.

The essential point is, as we have mentioned, that a being's state of perfection and completion furnishes no indication of the state of that being

6. The verb *abdaᶜa* (to create), of which Maimonides uses a participle, often connotes creation from nothing.
7. Or: "syllogism," and by extension "reasoning."

preceding its perfection. It involves no disgracefulness for us if someone says that the heavens were generated before the earth or the earth before the heavens or that the heavens have existed without stars or that a particular species of animals has existed without another species being in existence. For all this applies to the state of this universe when it was being generated. Similarly in the case of animals when they are being generated, the heart exists before the testicles – a circumstance that may be ocularly perceived – and the veins before the bones; and this is so in spite of the fact that after the animal has achieved perfection, no part of its body can exist in it if any part of all the others, without which the individual cannot possibly endure, does not exist.

All these assertions are needed if the text of Scripture is taken in its external sense, even though it must not be so taken, as shall be explained[8] when we shall speak of it at length. | You ought to memorize this notion. For it is a great wall that I have built around the Law, a wall that surrounds it warding off the stones of all those who project these missiles against it.

However, should Aristotle, I mean to say he who adopts his opinion, argue against us by saying: If this existent[9] provides no indication for us, how do you know that it is generated and that there has existed another nature that has generated it – we should say: This is not obligatory for us in view of what we wish to maintain. For at present we do not wish to establish as true that the world is created in time. But what we wish to establish is the possibility of its being created in time. Now this contention cannot be proved to be impossible by inferences drawn from the nature of what exists, which we do not set at nought. When the possibility of this contention has been established, as we have made clear, we shall go back and we shall make prevail the opinion asserting creation in time.

In this question[10] no way remains open to him except to show the impossibility for the world having been created in time, not by starting from the nature of being, but by starting from the judgments of the intellect with regard to the deity: these being the three methods that I have mentioned to you before.[11] By means of these methods they[12] wish to prove the eternity of the world, taking the deity as their starting point. I shall accordingly show you, in a following chapter, how doubts can be cast on these methods so that no proof whatever can be established as correct by means of them.

8. Cf. II 30. 9. I.e., the world. 10. Literally: "door," or "chapter."
11. Cf. II 14, methods 5, 6, and 7. 12. I.e., the Aristotelian philosophers.

CHAPTER 18

The first method they mention is the one through which, in their opinion, we are obliged to admit that the deity passed from potentiality to actuality inasmuch as He acted at a certain time and did not act at another time.

The way to destroy this doubt is most clear. For this conclusion necessarily follows only with regard to everything composed | of matter, which is endowed with possibility, and of form. When such a body acts in virtue of its form after not having acted, there was indubitably in it a thing that was in potentia and afterwards made the transition into actuality. Accordingly it undoubtedly must have undergone the action of something causing it to make this transition. For this premise has been demonstrated only with regard to things endowed with matter. On the other hand, that which is not a body and is not endowed with matter, has in its essence no possibility in any respect whatever. Thus all that it has is always in actu. Accordingly with regard to it, their contention does not necessarily follow; and it is not impossible with regard to it that it acts at a certain time and does not act at another time. For in a being separate from matter, this does not imply change or a passage from potentiality to actuality.

A proof of this is provided by the Active Intellect as it is conceived by Aristotle and his followers. For the Active Intellect, on the one hand, is separate from matter; and, on the other, it acts at a certain time and does not act at another time, as Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī] has explained in his treatise "On the Intellect." For there he has set down a statement that runs literally as follows. He says:[1] It is clear that the Active Intellect does not always act; rather it acts at a certain time and does not act at another time. This is literally what he says, and it is clearly true. But even if this is so, it cannot be said that the Active Intellect undergoes change or that it was acting potentially and became actual, because it did at a certain time what it did not do before. For there is no relation between bodies and that which is not body and no resemblance in any respect either at the time of their acting or at the time of their abstention from acting. In fact the acts of forms endowed with matter and the acts of a separate being are both called "act" only by equivocation. Hence it does not follow that if a separate being does not accomplish at a certain time the

1. This quotation, which is accurate (or nearly so), occurs in Bouyges' edition at p. 32, ll. 9–10. See above, I 73, n. 23.

act that it accomplishes later on, it has passed from potentiality to actuality, as we find it to follow in the case of forms endowed with matter. Perhaps, however, someone may think that this speech contains something misleading. For if the | Active Intellect necessarily acts at a certain time and does not act at another time, this does not result from a certain cause subsisting in its essence, but from the disposition of the portions of matter. For its action is perpetual with regard to all things properly disposed. Hence if there is an obstacle to this action, this results from a material disposition[2] and not from the Intellect in itself. He who thinks thus should know that our purpose is not to give information as to the cause for which God, may He be exalted, has acted at a certain time and has not acted at another time. We did not pursue this example to a conclusion; we did not say that just as the Active Intellect acts at a certain time and does not act at another time, though it be separate from matter, so God, may He be exalted, can do the same. We have not said this nor drawn this conclusion. If we had done this, it would indeed have been misleading. But the conclusion that we have drawn—and this conclusion is correct—is that though the Active Intellect, which is not a body or a force in a body, acts at one time but does not perform "the same action" at another time—whatever the cause of this may be—it is not said of it that it has passed from potentiality to actuality nor that there subsists possibility in its essence nor that it needs something causing it to make the transition from potentiality to actuality. Thus we are relieved from this great doubt that has been raised against us by him who affirms the eternity of the world. For as for us, we believe that He, may He be exalted, is neither a body nor a force in a body; and hence it does not follow that He changes if He acts after not having acted.

The second method is the one in which eternity is shown to be necessary because there do not subsist for Him, may He be exalted, any incentives, supervening accidents, and impediments. It is difficult to resolve this doubt, and the solution is subtle. Hear it.

Know that every agent endowed with will, who performs his acts for the sake of something, must of necessity act at a certain time | and not act at another time because of impediments or supervening accidents. To take an example: a man, for instance, may wish to have a house but does not build it because of impediments—if the building materials are not at hand or if they, though being at hand, have not been prepared for receiving the form because of the absence of tools. Sometimes, too, both the materials and the tools are at hand, but the man does not build because he does not

2. The disposition of the body upon which the Active Intellect exerts an action.

wish to build since he can dispense with a shelter. If, however, accidents like heat or cold supervene, he is compelled to seek a shelter, whereupon he will wish to build. It has thus become clear that supervening accidents may change the will and that impediments may oppose the will in such a way that it is not executed. All this, however, only occurs when acts are in the service of something that is external to the essence of the will. If, however, the act has no purpose whatever except to be consequent upon will, that will has no need of incentives. And the one who wills is not obliged, even if there are no impediments, to act always. For there is no external end for the sake of which he acts and that would render it necessary to act whenever there are no impediments preventing the attainment of the end. For in the case envisaged, the act is consequent upon the will alone.

Somebody might object: All this is correct, but does not the supposition that one[3] wishes at one time and does not wish at another time imply in itself a change? We shall reply to him: No, for the true reality and the quiddity of will means: to will and not to will. If the will in question belongs to a material being, so that some external end is sought thereby, then the will is subject to change because of impediments and supervening accidents. But as for a being separate from matter, its will, which does not exist in any respect for the sake of some other thing, is not subject to change. The fact that it may wish one thing now and another thing tomorrow does not constitute a change in its essence | and does not call for another cause; just as the fact that it acts at one time and does not act at another does not constitute a change, as we have explained. It shall be explained later on that it is only by equivocation that our will and that of a being separate from matter are both designated as "will," for there is no likeness between the two wills. Thus this objection has likewise been invalidated and it has been made clear that no incongruity necessarily follows for us in consequence of this method. As you know this was what we desired to achieve.

The third method: It is the one in which they argue the eternity of the world to be necessary because everything, with regard to which Wisdom decides that it should come forth, comes forth at the very moment of the decision. For His wisdom is eternal as is His essence, and in consequence that which necessarily proceeds from it is likewise eternal. This is a very feeble way of going on to an obligatory conclusion. For in the same way as we do not know what was His wisdom in making it necessary that the spheres should be nine – neither more nor less – and the number of the stars equal to what it is – neither more nor less – and that they should be neither

3. Or: God.

bigger nor smaller than they are, we do not know what was His wisdom in bringing into existence the universe at a recent period after its not having existed. The universe is consequent upon His perpetual and immutable wisdom. But we are completely ignorant of the rule of that wisdom and of the decision made by it. For, in our opinion, volition too is consequent upon wisdom; all these being one and the same thing – I mean His essence and His wisdom – for we do not believe in attributes. You shall hear much about this notion, when we shall speak of providence.[4] By looking at the matter in this way, this disgracefulness is thus abolished.

As for Aristotle's remark that the nations were agreed in past time that the angels dwell in heaven and that the deity is in heaven – something similar occurs in the external meaning of the scriptural texts – this does not serve as an indication of the eternity of the heavens, as he wishes to consider it. But this has been said because it serves as an indication that | the heaven proves to us the existence of the separate intellects, who are the spiritual beings and the angels, and the heaven proves to us the existence of the deity, who is its mover and its governor, as we shall explain. We shall make it clear that there is no proof indicating to us the existence of the Maker, according to our opinion, like the indication deriving from the heaven.[5] The latter also proves, as we have mentioned, according to the opinion of the philosophers, the existence of the Mover of the heaven and His not being either a body or a force subsisting in a body.

After having explained to you that our contention is possible and not – as is thought by him who affirms the eternity of the world – an impossibility, I shall return in the chapters that will follow, to explaining that our opinion can be shown, by means of speculation, to outweigh the other in the scales and to making manifest the disgraceful consequences necessarily deriving from his opinion.[6]

CHAPTER 19

It is clear to you from the doctrine of Aristotle, as well as from that of everyone who affirms the eternity of the world, that in his view that which exists has proceeded from the Creator in virtue of a necessity; that He,

4. Cf. Translator's Introduction.
5. The meaning seems to be that the proof in question is the most convincing of all.
6. The opinion of those who believe in the eternity a parte ante of the world is meant.

may He be exalted, is a cause and this world an effect and it was necessary that this should be so. Just as one does not ask with regard to Him, may He be exalted, why He exists or how He exists thus—I mean to say as One and incorporeal—so it may not be asked with regard to the world as a whole why it exists or how it exists thus. For all this, both the cause and the effect, exist thus necessarily, and nonexistence is not possible with regard to them in any respect nor their changing from the way they exist. Hence it follows necessarily from this opinion that of necessity everything must remain permanently as it is according to its nature and that nothing can change as far as its nature is concerned. For according to this opinion, it is impossible that a thing from among the existents should change as far as its nature is concerned. | Accordingly no thing has come into being in virtue of the purpose of One possessing purpose who chose freely and willed that all things should be as they are. For if they had come into being in virtue of the purpose of One possessing purpose, they would not have existed thus before they were purposed.

Now as for us, the matter is clear in our opinion: namely, that all things exist in virtue of a purpose and not of necessity, and that He who purposed them may change them and conceive another purpose, though not absolutely any purpose whatever. For the nature of impossibility is stable and cannot be abolished, as we shall make clear.

My purpose in this chapter is to explain to you, by means of arguments that come close to being a demonstration, that what exists indicates to us of necessity that it exists in virtue of the purpose of One who purposed; and to do this without having to take upon myself what the Mutakallimūn have undertaken—to abolish the nature of that which exists and to adopt atomism, the opinion according to which accidents are perpetually being created, and all their principles, which I have explained to you and which they only wished to use as an introduction in order to establish the method of particularization. Do not think that they have also said what I shall say. On the other hand, there is no doubt that they wished what I wish. They have also mentioned the same things that I shall mention and observed in them particularization. But in their opinion there is no difference between plants particularized through being red rather than white or through being sweet rather than bitter or between the heavens being particularized through having the shape they have instead of having been made square or triangular. They have established particularization by means of their premises, which you already know. I, on the other hand, shall establish particularization regarding the things with respect to which it ought to be

established by means of philosophic premises derived from the nature of that which exists.

I shall explain this method after first setting forth this premise: In every case in which things differing in any way from one another possess a common matter, there must of necessity be a cause other than, and different from, | the common matter – a cause that rendered it necessary that some of the things have a certain attribute, whereas some others have a different one. Or there may be several causes according to the number of the things differing from one another. This premise is unanimously agreed to both by those who believe in the eternity of the world and by those who believe in its having come into being in time. After having set forth this premise, I shall begin to explain what I wanted to explain by means of questions and answers concerning Aristotle's opinion.

We put a question to Aristotle, saying to him: You have demonstrated to us that the matter of everything that is beneath the sphere of the moon is one and common to everything. What then is the cause of the differences between the individuals of every species?

Then he gives us an answer to this, saying: The cause of the differences lies in the changes in the mixture of the compounds composed of this matter. For this common matter has in the first place received four forms, two qualities being consequent to each of these forms. In virtue of these four qualities, matter[1] was transformed into elements for that which is composed of it. For these elements[2] were first mixed through the action of the motion of the sphere and then they combined. Consequently, the differences in the compounds representing a mixture of the elements came about through the differing measures of the warm, the cold, the humid, and the dry. For in virtue of these various combinations, various dispositions to receive various forms come about in the compounds. Again through these forms, the compounds become disposed to receive other forms. And this continues constantly in this manner. Again the matter of the specific form, which is one, has great latitude with regard to quantity and quality, and the individuals of the species differ in a way corresponding to this latitude, as has been elucidated in the natural science. All this is correct and clear to whoever treats his own soul equitably and does not deceive it.

Thereupon we | again put a question to Aristotle, saying to him: Since

1. In the context it seems more likely that "matter" is the subject of this sentence rather than "the four forms." From the syntactical point of view there is nothing to choose between these two constructions.
2. In this case the subject seems to be "elements" rather than "matter."

the mixture of the elements is the cause of the various matters being predisposed to receive the various forms, what is it that prepared this first matter so that a part of it receives the form of fire and part of it the form of earth and that which is intermediate between these two parts is prepared to receive the forms of water and of air, while at the same time the matter of the universe is one and common to all things? Why is the matter of earth more fitted for the form of earth and the matter of fire for the form of fire?

Thereupon Aristotle gave an answer to this, saying: This has been made necessary by the differences between the various places, for these differences have made it necessary for this one matter to have various dispositions. For the part that is near the encompassing sphere, was endowed by the latter with an impress of subtlety and swiftness of motion and nearness to the nature of the sphere. Consequently it received, in virtue of this disposition, the form of fire. And the more distant matter is from the encompassing sphere in the direction of the center of the earth,[3] the thicker and denser and less luminous it becomes, so that it becomes earth. The same cause obtains with regard to water and air. Thus this is necessary; for it is absurd that the matter in question should not be in a place, or that the encompassing sphere should be the center of the earth,[4] and the center of the earth[4] the encompassing sphere. This has been made necessary by particularization of matter by means of various forms; I mean by this the disposition to receive various forms.

Thereupon we put a question to him, saying: Is the matter of the encompassing sphere—I mean to say the heavens—the same as the matter of the elements?

He said: No. That[5] is another matter and those are other forms. And the term "body," applied to the bodies that are with us and to the heavenly bodies, is equivocal, as has been explained by latter-day thinkers. All this has been demonstrated.

From here on listen, you who are engaged in the study of this my Treatise, to what I shall say. You already know Aristotle's demonstration that from the difference of acts | the difference of forms may be inferred. Consequently, inasmuch as the motions of the four elements are rectilinear and the motion of the sphere is circular, it is known that the matter of these elements is not the matter of the sphere. And this is correct according to natural speculation. And as you have also found that the elements whose motions are rectilinear differ from one another with regard to direction—

3. Or: of the world. 4. Or: of the world.
5. I.e., the matter of the heavenly spheres.

some of them moving upwards and the others downwards – and as it has likewise been found that in considering those that move in the same direction one is the more rapid and the other the slower, it is known that the elements differ with regard to their forms. And thereby it is known that there are four elements. If one has recourse to this very kind of inference, it also follows necessarily that the matter of all the heavenly spheres is one, as all of them have circular motion, and that the form of every sphere is different from that of every other sphere, as one moves from the East to the West and another from the West to the East and as they also differ in their rapidity or slowness.

Accordingly the following question should be put to him,[6] and it should be said to him: Inasmuch as the matter in question is common to all the heavenly spheres and, on the other hand, since every substratum in them has been particularized so as to receive a certain form other than the forms received by the others, who is it that has particularized these substrata and has predisposed them to receive various forms? Is there beyond the sphere something else to which this particularization can be attributed except God, may He be cherished and exalted?

Here I shall call your attention to the depth of Aristotle's penetration and to his extraordinary apprehension and to the extent to which this objection undoubtedly pressed hard upon him so that he wished to escape from it by recourse to means in which the nature of that which exists did not help him. Even though he does not mention this objection, it appears from what he says that he wished to bring order for our benefit into the being of the spheres, as he has brought order for us into the existence of that which is beneath the sphere. He wished to do this in order that | the whole should exist in virtue of natural necessity and not in virtue of the purpose of one who purposes according to his will whatever it be and the particularization of one who particularizes in whatever way he likes. Now this task has not been accomplished by him, nor will it ever be accomplished. For he wished to give a cause for the fact that the sphere moves from the East and not from the West; and he wished to give a cause for the fact that some of them are swift of motion and others slow and that this is necessary because of the order of their position with regard to the highest sphere. He also wished to give a cause for the fact that every star[7] from among the seven has a number of spheres, while this great number of fixed stars is to be found in one sphere. He wished to assign causes for all this so that these things would be ordered for us in a natural order that is

6. I.e., to Aristotle. 7. I.e., planet.

due to necessity. However, he has accomplished none of these undertakings. As a matter of fact, all that he has explained to us regarding what is beneath the sphere of the moon follows an order conforming to that which exists, an order whose causes are clear. One can say of it that it derives of necessity from the motion and the powers of the sphere. On the other hand, one can say of all that he has stated with regard to matters pertaining to the sphere, that he has assigned no clear cause with regard to this, and that the matter, as he sets it out, does not follow an order for which necessity can be claimed. For we see that in the case of some spheres, the swifter of motion is above the slower; that in the case of others, the slower of motion is above the swifter; and that, again in another case, the motions of the spheres are of equal velocity though one be above the other. There are also other very grave matters if regarded from the point of view that these things are as they are in virtue of necessity. I shall deal with these points in a special chapter of this Treatise.[8]

To sum up: It was undoubtedly when Aristotle realized the feebleness of what he said in setting forth and expounding the ground and the causes[9] of these things, that he prefaced his starting upon these investigations with a statement | that runs literally as follows: Now we desire to make a sufficient inquiry into two questions. For it is obligatory for us to inquire into them and to speak concerning them according to the capacity of our intellects, our knowledge, and our opinion. However, no one ought to attribute this undertaking to overboldness and temerity on our part, but rather should our desire and ardor for philosophy be admired. When, therefore, we seek out noble and important questions and are able to propound for them—though it be only to some small extent—a well-founded solution, it behooves the hearer to feel great joy and jubilation.[10] This is literally what he says. It has thus become clear to you that he was indubitably aware of the feebleness of those assertions; and all the more so since the

8. Cf. II 24.

9. Maimonides uses the word *taʿlīl* (which is related to *ʿilla*) as well as the term *sabab* (in the plural). Both *ʿilla* and *sabab* signify "cause" and are often synonymous. However, *sabab* sometimes means "intermediate cause," and Maimonides may have used it here in this sense in contradistinction to *ʿilla*. It is, however, equally possible that Maimonides' reference to both terms in this passage does not indicate an intention to differentiate them.

10. *De Caelo* ii.12.291b24 ff. The translation is rather free. In Guthrie's translation the passage reads: "There are two difficulties which might naturally be felt, and we must do our best to give the most plausible solution, looking upon a readiness to do so as evidence of modesty rather than of rashness, if the seeker, out of thirst for philosophy, rests content with but a little enlightenment in matters where we are surrounded by such unfathomable obscurities." Cf. Translator's Introduction.

science of mathematics had not been perfected in his time and since the motions of the sphere were not known in his time to the extent to which we know them today. It appears to me that his assertion in the "Metaphysics"[11] that a separate intellect should be supposed for every sphere is also made with a view to the notion in question: namely, in order that there should be there something that would particularize every sphere by means of some motion with which it would be endowed. We shall explain later on that he gains nothing by this. With regard to his saying in the text that I have set out for you, "according to the capacity of our intellects, our knowledge, and our opinion": I shall explain to you the meaning of this, a meaning that I have not seen set forth by any of the commentators. When saying "our opinion," he has in mind the point of view of necessity that is represented by the affirmation of the eternity of the world. When saying "our knowledge," he has in mind the clear and generally accepted point that each of those things[12] certainly has a cause and ground and that it is not a thing that happens by chance. When saying "our intellects," he has in mind our incapacity to assign causes for things of such perfection and accomplishment. But he | deemed that to a small extent these might be assigned, and he did this. For his statement regarding the rapidity of the universal motion and the slowness of the sphere of the fixed stars because of its opposite direction has recourse to a strange and bizarre cause. Similarly he says that as the distance of a sphere from the eighth sphere is greater, its motion is more rapid. However, this is not consistently so, as I have made clear to you.[13] There is something even more striking: namely, that there are spheres beneath the eighth that move from the East to the West. These consequently must be more rapid than what is beneath them and likewise moves from the East to the West, even though the rapidity of the motion of the latter spheres moving from the East is near to that of the motion of the ninth sphere. However, as I have let you know, the science of astronomy was not in his[14] time what it is today.

Know that on the basis of our opinion, that is, the opinion of the community of those who affirm the production of the world in time, all this becomes easy and is consistent with our principles. For we say that there is a being that has particularized, just as it willed, every sphere in regard to its motion and rapidity; but we do not know in what respect there is wisdom in making these things exist in this fashion. Now if Aristotle had been

11. Cf. *Metaphysics* xii.8.1074a15 ff.
12. I.e., the heavenly spheres and things pertaining to them.
13. Earlier in this chapter. 14. I.e., Aristotle's.

able – as he thought – to give us the cause for the differences between the motions of the spheres so that these should be in accordance with the order of the positions of the spheres with regard to one another, this would have been extraordinary. In that case the cause of particularization would have been constituted by the differences between the motions of the spheres, just as the cause of the differences between the elements lies in their various positions between the encompassing sphere and the center of the earth.[15] However, things are not ordered thus, as I have explained to you.

A fact that makes even more clear than what has been said about the existence of particularization in the sphere, and with regard to which no one would be able to find a cause particularizing it other than the purpose of one who purposes, is the existence of the stars. For the fact that a sphere is always in motion and a star | is always fixed proves that the matter of the stars is not the matter of the spheres. In fact Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī] in his glosses on the "Akroasis,"[16] has made a statement of which the literal text is as follows. He said: There is a difference between a sphere and the stars, for a sphere is transparent whereas the stars are not transparent. The cause for this lies in the fact that there is a difference between the two matters and the two forms. But this difference is small. This is literally the text of his statement. I, however, do not say "small," but say that they are very different. For I do not infer this from the fact of transparency but from the motions. Accordingly it has become clear to me that there are three kinds of matter and three kinds of forms: the bodies that are always by themselves at rest – these are the bodies of the stars; the bodies that are always in motion – these are the bodies of the spheres; the bodies that are sometimes in motion and sometimes at rest – these are the elements. Would that I knew what made the two kinds of matter,[17] between which there is either an extreme difference – this is what it appears to be to me – or a small difference – as is stated by Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī] – and who has provided the kinds of matter in question with the dispositions necessary for this union.

To sum up: It would be a strange thing that there should be two different bodies, one of which, being fixed in, but not mixed with, the other, should be localized in the latter in a particular place and attached to this second body; and that this should come about without its having been produced through the purpose of one who purposed it. And it is even stranger that there should exist the numerous stars that are in the eighth

15. Or: of the world. 16. I.e., Aristotle's *Physics*.
17. I.e., the matter of the spheres and the matter of the stars.

sphere, all of which are globes, some of them small and some big, one star being here and another at a cubit's distance according to what seems to the eye, or ten stars being crowded and assembled together while there may be a very great stretch in which nothing is to be found. What is the cause that has particularized one stretch in such a way that ten stars should be found in it and has particularized another stretch in such a way that no star should be found in it? Again the body of the whole sphere is one simple body in which there are no differences. What accordingly can be the cause for the fact that a certain part of the sphere should be | more fitted to receive the particular star found in it than another part? All this and everything that is of this sort would be very unlikely or rather would come near to being impossible if it should be believed that all this proceeded obligatorily and of necessity from the deity, as is the opinion of Aristotle. If, however, it is believed that all this came about in virtue of the purpose of one who purposed who made this thus, that opinion would not be accompanied by a feeling of astonishment and would not be at all unlikely. And there would remain no other point to be investigated except if you were to say: What is the cause for this having been purposed? What is known may be epitomized as follows: All this has been produced for an object that we do not know and is not an aimless and fortuitous act. In fact you know that the veins and nerves of any individual dog or ass have not happened fortuitously, nor are their measures fortuitous. Neither is it by chance that one vein is thick and another thin, that one nerve has many ramifications and another is not thus ramified, that one descends straight down and another is bent. All this is as it is with a view to useful effects whose necessity is known. How then can one who uses his intellect imagine that the positions, measures, and numbers of the stars and the motions of their various spheres are without an object or fortuitous? There is no doubt that all of these things are necessary according to the purpose of one who purposes. On the other hand, the supposition that all these things have been ordered in virtue of necessity and not in virtue of a purpose is very remote indeed from being conceivable. To my mind there is no proof of purpose stronger than the one founded upon the differences between the motions of the spheres and upon the fact that the stars are fixed in the spheres. For this reason you will find that all the prophets used the stars and the spheres as proofs for the diety's existing necessarily. Thus in the traditional story of *Abraham*, there occurs the tale, | which is generally known, about his contemplation of the stars. Again *Isaiah*, calling attention to the conclusions to be drawn from the stars, says: *Lift up your eyes on high, and see: who hath created these?*

and so on.[18] *Jeremiah* says similarly: *He made the heavens.*[19] *Abraham* says: *The Lord, the God of the heavens.*[20] And the chief of the prophets says: *Who rideth upon the heaven,*[21] an expression we have explained.[22] This is the correct proof, which is not exposed to doubt. The explanation thereof is as follows: With regard to all the differences in the things beneath the sphere and even though the matter subsisting in these things is one, as we have explained, you can make out that they were particularized through the powers of the sphere and through the various positions of matter with regard to the sphere, just as Aristotle has taught us. But who is the one who particularized the differences that are found in the spheres and the stars unless it be God, may He be exalted? If, however, someone says that the separate intellects did it, he gains nothing by saying this. The explanation of this is as follows: The intellects are not bodies, which they would have to be in order to have a local position in relation to the sphere. Why then should one particular sphere move in its motion induced by desire toward its separate intellect in an eastern direction, and another in a western? Do you consider that one particular intellect is to be found in an eastern direction and another in a western? Then there is the fact that one sphere is relatively slower, while another is more rapid; and this, as you know, does not correspond to the relations obtaining between the distances of the various spheres from each other. Thus, of necessity, one cannot avoid saying that the nature and substance of that particular sphere require that its motion be in a certain direction and with a certain velocity and that a necessary concomitant of its desire for a certain notion should manifest itself in this manner.[23] And this is what Aristotle says and explicitly states.

We have accordingly come back to the point we were dealing with at first. Accordingly we shall say: If the matter of all the spheres is one and the same, in virtue of what thing has any sphere been so particularized as to receive a nature other than the nature of any other sphere? How then is there to be found in that sphere a certain desire, different from the desire of that other sphere, that | obliges one to move in this direction and the other to move in another direction? There must of necessity be something

18. Isa. 40:26.
19. These words do not occur in Jeremiah. Cf., however, Jer. 32:17, 10:12, and 51:15.
20. Gen. 24:7. 21. Deut. 33:26. 22. Cf. I 70.
23. This translation seems to me to render more faithfully the construction of the Arabic sentence than the renderings of Ibn Tibbon and Munk. The latter's translation would read in English as follows: " . . . and that the result of its desire should be such a thing obtained in this manner."

that particularizes. This examination has thus conducted us to the investigation of two problems, one of which may be stated as follows: Is it of necessity obligatory or not, considering the existence of these differences, that these should be due to the purpose of one who purposed and not due to necessity? The second problem may be stated as follows: Supposing that all this is due to the purpose of one who purposed and who particularized the spheres in this way, is it obligatory that this should have been produced after its having been nonexistent, or is it not obligatory so that He who particularizes has never ceased doing this? This second opinion has also been affirmed by some[24] of those who believe in the eternity of the world. In the following chapters I shall begin to treat of these two problems, and I shall explain what is necessary to explain concerning them.

CHAPTER 20

Aristotle demonstrates regarding all natural things that they do not come about by chance—his demonstration being, as he has stated it: the fortuitous things do not occur either always or in the majority of cases;[1] the natural things, however, occur either always or in the majority of cases. Thus the heavens and all that is in them remain always in certain states that do not change, as we have explained, either in their essences or through change of place. As for the natural things that are beneath the sphere of the moon, some of them occur always and others in the majority of cases. Instances of what occurs always are the heating action of fire and the falling-down of a stone, while instances of what occurs in the majority of cases are the shapes and acts of the individuals of every species. All this is clear. Now if the particular things of the world are not due to chance, how can the whole of it be due to chance? This is a demonstration | proving that these beings are not due to chance. Here is the text of the statement of Aristotle in his refutation of those of his predecessors who believed that this world has happened to come about by chance and spontaneously, without a cause. He says:[2] Other people have thought that the cause of these heavens and all these worlds is to be sought in their spontaneity. They say that the

24. Or: one.
1. Cf. *Physics* ii.5.196b10 ff.
2. *Physics* ii.4.196a25 ff. The translation is by and large accurate.

revolution and the motion that has differentiated and constituted all things[3] according to this order were due to their spontaneity. Now this is a point that arouses strong astonishment; I mean the fact that they say concerning animals and plants that they do not come about and are not produced by chance, but have a cause, which is either nature or intellect or some other similar thing – for not any haphazard thing is generated from every seed or sperm, but from this particular seed there comes into being an olive tree and from that sperm a human being – and that at the same time they say of the heavens and of the bodies that alone are divine among all the visible bodies, that they have come into being spontaneously and that they have no cause at all such as is possessed by the animals and the plants. This is the text of his statement. Then he starts to explain in a more lengthy passage the falsity of these imaginings.

Accordingly it is clear to you that Aristotle believes and demonstrates that none of these beings are through chance. Now what contradicts their having come into being[4] through chance is their having come into being[5] essentially – I mean their having a cause that renders it necessary for them to come into being in this particular fashion. It is because of this cause that they exist in the way they do. This is what has been demonstrated, and this is what Aristotle believes. But it is not clear to me that Aristotle believes that, because these beings have not come into being spontaneously, it follows necessarily that they have come into being in virtue of the purpose of one who purposed and the will of one who willed. For | to me a combination between existing in virtue of necessity and being produced in time in virtue of a purpose and a will – a combination uniting these two – comes near to a combination of two contraries. For the meaning of necessity, as Aristotle believes it, is that everything among the beings, which is not an artifact, cannot but have a cause necessitating that particular thing – a cause that has brought it into being as it is – and that this cause has a second cause and this second cause similarly a third one, until finally a first cause is reached from which everything is necessarily derived. This is so because of the impossibility of an infinite series of causes. However, he does not believe withal that the necessity in virtue of which the existence of the world is derived from the Creator – I mean to say from the First Cause – is like the necessity in virtue of which shadow is derived from a body or heat from fire or light from the sun, as those say of him who do not understand what he said. Rather does he believe that this necessity is somewhat like the necessity of the derivation of an intellectum from an intellect, for the

3. Or: the universe. 4. Or: their being. 5. Or: their being.

intellect is the agent[6] of the intellectum in respect of its being an intellectum. For this First Cause—though it is according to him an intellect of the highest and most perfect rank of being so that he says that it wills what is necessarily derived from it and rejoices and takes pleasure in it—cannot will anything contrary to this.[7] Now this is not called purpose, and the notion of purpose is not included in it. For a man may will to have two eyes and two hands, and rejoice in having them and take pleasure in it and cannot will anything contrary to this. However, that individual does not have two eyes and two hands because of a purpose on his part and because of his having particularized this shape and these actions. For the notions of purpose and of particularization only apply to a nonexistent thing for which it is possible to exist just as it was purposed and particularized and for which it also is possible not to exist in this fashion. I do not know whether | the discourse and speech of Aristotle that these things must necessarily have a cause was understood by certain latter-day men to refer to purpose and particularization, or whether they disagree with him on this and choose the opinion affirming purpose and particularization, deeming that it does not contradict the eternity of the world.

After what we have explained, I shall begin to treat of the opinion of these latter-day men.

CHAPTER 21

Know that among the latter-day philosophers who affirm the eternity of the world there are some[1] who maintain that God, may He be exalted, is the Agent[2] of the world, who chose that it should exist, purposed it, and particularized it so that it should be as it actually is. They think, however, that it is impossible that this should have happened at one particular time rather than at another; according to them the world has always been and will always be like this. They say: What compels us to conceive of an agent[3] as unable to effect a thing unless the agent precedes the act in time is the fact that this necessarily happens to us when we effect something. This is so because in every agent of whom this may be

6. I.e., the efficient cause. 7. I.e., to what is derived from it.
1. The Arabic word may also refer to a single philosopher.
2. Or: Maker. The Arabic term used is applied to the efficient cause.
3. Cf. preceding note.

predicated, there is a certain privation; accordingly he is at first an agent in potentia and, when he acts, he passes into actuality. But the deity, may He be exalted, in whom there is no privation and nothing at all in potentia, does not precede His act, for He has always been an agent in actu. And just as there is a difference—and what a difference!—between His essence and ours, so is there a difference between the relation linking His act and Himself and the relation linking our act and ourselves. They draw the same analogy[4] with regard to particularization and will. For there is no difference between your saying, when treating of this matter: an agent, one who wills, one who purposes, one who chooses freely, or one who particularizes. And they say | it is also impossible that His act or His will should change, as we have explained.[5]

It has already become clear to you, who are engaged in the study of this my Treatise, that these people have altered the term "necessity," but have let its meaning remain. Perhaps they intended to choose a more beautiful expression or to get rid of one that is shocking. For the meaning of the assertion, as maintained by Aristotle, that this being proceeds necessarily from its cause and is perpetual in virtue of the latter's perpetuity—that cause being the deity—is identical with the meaning of their assertion that the world derives from the act of the deity or exists in virtue of His purpose, will, free choice, and particularization, but that it has always been and will always be as it is—just as the sunrise is indubitably the agent of the day, though neither of them precedes the other in point of time. But this is not the meaning of purpose, as we propose to conceive it. For we wish to signify by the term that it—I mean the world—does not necessarily proceed from Him, may He be exalted, as an effect necessarily proceeds from its cause without being able to be separated from it or to change unless its cause or one of its modes also changes. Now if you understand the meaning of the term in this way, it is already known that it is absurd to say that the world necessarily proceeds from the being of the deity as an effect proceeds from its cause, and it is further known that the world has come about through an act of the deity or through His particularization.

Accordingly the matter is reduced to this, and the discussion finally leads us to an inquiry concerning the diversity existing in the heavens, with regard to which it has been demonstrated that it must necessarily have a cause. The inquiry concerns the question whether this cause is the ground of

4. The Arabic word also means "syllogism" and is sometimes used in the sense of "reasoning."
5. Cf. II 13.

this diversity, the latter having necessarily proceeded from the existence of this cause, or whether this cause is the agent that has brought about this diversity and has particularized it in the way in which we, the followers of *Moses our Master*, believe. We shall speak of this after we have first set forth a preface by which we shall explain to you the meaning of the necessity maintained by Aristotle so that you should conceive it. Thereupon | I shall begin to explain to you, with the help of speculation and philosophic proofs devoid of falsification, my preference in favor of the opinion according to which the world has been produced in time.

When he[6] says that the first intellect necessarily proceeds from God, the second from the first, and the third from the second, and also when he holds that the spheres necessarily proceed from the intellects, and when he sets forth the famous order that you know from various passages in his writings – that order of which we have already expounded a part here[7] – it is clear that he does not wish to signify thereby that first a certain thing was, and then, later, the thing necessarily proceeding from the first thing was produced in time. For he does not say that any of these was produced in time. By the term "necessity," he merely means to signify causality; it is as if he said the first intellect is the cause of the existence of the second intellect, the second of the third, and so on till the last of them. The same applies to the discourse concerning the spheres and the first matter; according to him, none of these things precedes in time, or exists without, any of these other things. It is, to take an example, as if someone said that roughness, smoothness, hardness, softness, thickness, and absorbency, necessarily derive from the first qualities. For no one doubts that these qualities – I mean heat, cold, humidity, and dryness – produce roughness, smoothness, hardness, softness, thickness, absorbency, and other similar qualities. Accordingly they necessarily derive from the four first qualities, even though it is impossible that a body should exist endowed with the four first qualities and devoid of the secondary ones. It is in an exactly analogous way that Aristotle says, concerning that which exists in general, that in it this particular thing necessarily proceeds from that and so forth till the series ends with the First Cause, as he himself says, or the first intellect or however you may wish to call it. All of us aim at one and the same principle. But | he holds, as I have recounted to you, that everything that is other than it necessarily proceeds from it. We affirm that all these things have been made by Him in virtue of a purpose and a will directed toward this particular being, which did not exist and now became an

6. I.e., the Aristotelian philosopher. 7. Cf. II 4.

existent in virtue of His will, may He be exalted. Now I shall begin to set forth in the following chapters my proofs and my preference in favor of the world's having been produced in time according to our opinion.

CHAPTER 22

A proposition universally agreed upon, accepted by Aristotle and by all those who have philosophized, reads as follows: It is impossible that anything but a single simple thing should proceed from a simple thing. If the thing is composite, there may proceed from it several things according to the number of simple things of which the compound is composed. Thus, for instance, what proceeds from fire, in which two qualities – heat and dryness – have combined is the action of heating by means of its heat and that of drying by means of its dryness. Similarly in the case of a thing composed of matter and form, certain things proceed from it in respect to its matter and certain other things in respect to its form, if it is of multiple composition. In accordance with this proposition, Aristotle says that what first proceeded from God was constituted by a single simple intellect only.

A second proposition: Any thing at random does not proceed from any other thing at random, but there subsists necessarily a certain conformity between the cause and its effect. Even in the case of accidents, one accident at random does not proceed from any other accident at random, as would be the case if, for instance, a quantity would proceed from a quality, or a quality from a quantity. Similarly form does not proceed from matter nor matter from form.

A third proposition: Every agent, acting in virtue of purpose and will and not in virtue of its nature, accomplishes many different acts.

A fourth proposition: A whole composed of various juxtaposed substances may more appropriately be termed a composition than a whole composed of various substances that have combined with one another. For instance, a bone, flesh, a vein, a nerve, are simpler than the whole of a hand or that of a foot composed of nerves, flesh, veins, and bones. This is too clear to require additional discourse.

After having set forth these premises, I say: With regard to Aristotle's statement that the first intellect is the cause of the second, the second of the

third, and so on – even if there were thousands of degrees, the last intellect would indubitably still be simple. How then can the composition have come to exist, the composition existing – as Aristotle believes – in the beings in virtue of necessity? We shall concede to him all that he says concerning a composition of various notions coming about in the intellects, as their intellecta are multiple, when the intellects get farther away from the First Cause. But even if we grant him this guess and conjecture, how can the intellects be a cause for the procession of the spheres from them? And what relation can there be between matter and that which being separate has no matter at all? And supposing that we concede that the cause of every sphere is, in the fashion stated, an intellect – inasmuch as there subsists composition in the intellect, which intellectually cognizes itself and what is other than itself, so that it is as it were composed of two things, from one of which another and lower intellect proceeds, whereas a sphere proceeds from the other – he should still be asked: How does a sphere proceed from the one simple thing from which it proceeds? | A sphere is composed of two kinds of matter and two forms: the matter and the form of the sphere itself and the matter and the form of the star fixed in the sphere. Now if this comes about in virtue of a procession, we cannot but require for this compound a composite cause, the procession of the body of the sphere being occasioned by one of its parts and that of the body of the star by the other. This would be so if the matter of the stars were all of it one and the same. However, the substance of the bright stars may be a certain substance and that of the dim ones may be another substance. It is also known that every body is composed of its matter and its form.

Accordingly it has become clear to you that these things do not conform to the conception of necessity that he sets forth. Similarly the diversity of the motions of the spheres does not agree with the order of their arrangement one beneath the other, in such a way that necessity could be claimed in this field. We have already mentioned this.[1] There is, furthermore, another point that ruins everything that has been established with regard to natural things if the state of the heavens is considered. For if the matter of all the spheres is one and the same, why is it not necessary for the form of one particular sphere to be transferred to the matter of another, in accord with what happens beneath the sphere of the moon because of the aptitude of matter? And why is one particular form permanently in one particular matter although the matter of all is common? Unless – by God! – someone asserts that the matter of every sphere is other than that of the others.

1. Cf. II 19.

In that case the form of the motion of the spheres would not be indicative of their matter. This would be the ruin of all principles. Furthermore, if the matter of all the stars is one and the same, whereby are their individuals differentiated—is it by their forms or by accidents? In either case it would be necessary that the forms or accidents in question should be transferred one after the other to each of the stars, in order that | the aptitude of matter not be set at nought. Hereby it has become clear to you that when we say the matter of the spheres or the matter of the stars, these expressions contain none of the meaning of that matter here, this being a case of the equivocal use of terms; and that every being from among the bodies of the spheres has an existence that is proper to it and that it does not have in common with anything other than itself. How then could it happen that the spheres have in common their circular motion and the stars their fixity?

If, however, we believe that all this has been produced through the purpose of one who purposed, made, and particularized it—as His wisdom, which cannot be grasped, required—none of these questions affect us, whereas they do affect him who claims that all this has come about through necessity and not through the will of one who wills. This is an opinion that does not agree with the order of that which exists, an opinion in favor of which no cause and no new persuasive proof have been brought forward. Withal very disgraceful conclusions would follow upon it. Namely, it would follow that the deity, whom everyone who is intelligent recognizes to be perfect in every kind of perfection, could, as far as all the beings are concerned, produce nothing new in any of them; if He wished to lengthen a fly's wing or to shorten a worm's foot, He would not be able to do it. But Aristotle will say that He would not wish it and that it is impossible for Him to will something different from what is; that it would not add to His perfection but would perhaps from a certain point of view be a deficiency. I shall sum up for your benefit, and though I know that many men imbued with a partisan spirit shall tax me because of this statement either with having but little comprehension of their argument or with deliberately deviating from it, yet shall I not, because of that, refrain from saying what I in my inadequacy have apprehended and understood. Accordingly this summing-up will be as follows:

Everything that Aristotle has said about all that exists from beneath the sphere of the moon to the center of the earth is indubitably correct, and no one | will deviate from it unless he does not understand it or unless he has preconceived opinions that he wishes to defend or that lead him to a denial of a thing that is manifest. On the other hand, everything that

Aristotle expounds with regard to the sphere of the moon and that which is above it is, except for certain things, something analogous to guessing and conjecturing. All the more does this apply to what he says about the order of the intellects and to some of the opinions regarding the divine that he believes; for the latter contain grave incongruities and perversities that manifestly and clearly appear as such to all the nations,[2] that propagate evil, and that he cannot demonstrate.

Do not criticize me for having set out the doubts that attach to his opinion. You may say: Can doubts disprove an opinion or establish its contrary as true? Surely this is not so. However, we shall treat this philosopher as his followers have enjoined us to treat him. For Alexander has explained that in every case in which no demonstration is possible, the two contrary opinions with regard to the matter in question should be posited as hypotheses, and it should be seen what doubts attach to each of them: the one to which fewer doubts attach should be believed. Alexander says[3] that things are thus[4] with respect to all the opinions regarding the divine that Aristotle sets forth and regarding which no demonstration is possible. For everyone who has come after Aristotle says that what Aristotle stated about them arouses fewer doubts than whatever else might be said about them. We have acted in this way when it was to our mind established as true that, regarding the question whether the heavens are generated or eternal, neither of the two contrary opinions could be demonstrated. For we have explained the doubts attaching to each of the opinions and have shown to you that the opinion favoring the eternity of the world is the one that raises more doubts and is more harmful for the belief that ought to be held with regard to the deity. | And this, in addition to the fact that the world's being produced in time is the opinion of *Abraham our Father* and our prophet *Moses*, may peace be on both of them.

As we have mentioned that opinions should be examined by means of the doubts they arouse, I see fit to explain to you something with regard to that.

2. Or: to all the religious communities.
3. On this quotation from Alexander of Aphrodisias, cf. Translator's Introduction.
4. Or: that he conducts things thus.

CHAPTER 23

Know that when one compares the doubts attaching to a certain opinion with those attaching to the contrary opinion and has to decide which of them arouses fewer doubts, one should not take into account the number of the doubts but rather consider how great is their incongruity and what is their disagreement with what exists. Sometimes a single doubt is more powerful than a thousand other doubts. Furthermore this comparison can be correctly made only by someone for whom the two contraries are equal. But whoever prefers one of the two opinions because of his upbringing or for some advantage, is blind to the truth. While one who entertains an unfounded predilection cannot make himself oppose a matter susceptible of demonstration, in matters like those under discussion such an opposition is often possible. Sometimes, if you wish it, you can rid yourself of an unfounded predilection, free yourself of what is habitual, rely solely on speculation, and prefer the opinion that you ought to prefer. However, to do this you must fulfill several conditions. The first of them is that you should know how good your mind is and that your inborn disposition is sound. This becomes clear to you through training in all the mathematical sciences and through grasp of the rules of logic. The second condition is to have knowledge of the natural sciences and to apprehend their truth so that you should know your doubts in their true reality. The third condition concerns your morals. For | whenever a man finds himself inclining – and to our mind it makes no difference if this happens because of his natural disposition or because of an acquired characteristic – toward lusts and pleasures or preferring anger and fury, giving the upper hand to his irascible faculty and letting go its reins, he shall be at fault and stumble wherever he goes. For he shall seek opinions that will help him in that toward which his nature inclines. I have drawn your attention to this in order that you should not be deceived. For someone may some day lead you into vain imaginings through setting forth a doubt concerning the creation of the world in time, and you may be very quick to let yourself be deceived. For in this opinion is contained the destruction of the foundation of the Law and a presumptuous assertion with regard to the deity. Be therefore always suspicious in your mind as to this point and accept the authority of the two prophets[1] who are the pillars of the well-being of the human species with

1. I.e., Abraham and Moses.

regard to its beliefs and its associations. Do not turn away from the opinion according to which the world is new, except because of a demonstration. Now such a demonstration does not exist in nature.

Furthermore, the student of this Treatise should not engage in criticism because of my using this rhetorical mode of speech in order to support the affirmation of the newness of the world. For Aristotle, the prince of the philosophers, in his main writings has likewise used rhetorical speeches in support of his opinion that the world is eternal. In such cases it may truly be said: *Shall not our perfect Torah be [worth as much] as their frivolous talk?*[2] If he refers in support of his opinion to the ravings of the Sabians, how can we but refer in support of our opinion to the words of *Moses* and *Abraham* and to everything that follows therefrom?

I have promised you a chapter in which I shall expound to you the grave doubts that would affect whoever thinks that man has acquired knowledge as to the arrangement of the motions of the sphere and as to their being natural things going on according to the law of necessity, things whose order and arrangement are clear. I shall now explain this to you. |

CHAPTER 24

You know of astronomical matters what you have read under my guidance and understood from the contents of the "Almagest." But there was not enough time to begin another speculative study with you. What you know already is that as far as the action of ordering the motions and making the course of the stars conform to what is seen is concerned, everything depends on two principles: either that of the epicycles or that of the eccentric spheres or on both of them. Now I shall draw your attention to the fact that both those principles are entirely outside the bounds of reasoning[1] and opposed to all that has been made clear in natural science. In the first place, if one affirms as true the existence of an epicycle revolving round a certain sphere, positing at the same time that that revolution is not around the center of the sphere carrying the epicycles — and this has been supposed with regard to the moon and to the five planets — it follows necessarily that there

2. B.T., Baba Bathra, 116a; Megillath Taʿanith, V.

1. The Arabic word used is *qiyās*; it means "syllogism" (and in a broader sense, "reasoning") or "analogy."

is rolling, that is, that the epicycle rolls and changes its place completely. Now this is the impossibility that was to be avoided, namely, the assumption that there should be something in the heavens that changes its place. For this reason Abū Bakr Ibn al-Ṣā'igh[2] states in his extant discourse on astronomy that the existence of epicycles is impossible. He points out the necessary inference already mentioned. In addition to this impossibility necessarily following from the assumption of the existence of epicycles, he sets forth there other impossibilities that also follow from that assumption. I shall explain them to you now.

The revolution of the epicycles is not around the center of the world. Now it is a fundamental principle of this world that there are three motions: a motion from the midmost point of the world, a motion toward that point, and a motion around that point. But if | an epicycle existed, its motion would be neither from that point nor toward it nor around it.

Furthermore, it is one of the preliminary assumptions of Aristotle in natural science that there must necessarily be some immobile thing around which circular motion takes place. Hence it is necessary that the earth should be immobile. Now if epicycles exist, theirs would be a circular motion that would not revolve round an immobile thing. I have heard that Abū Bakr has stated that he had invented an astronomical system in which no epicycles figured, but only eccentric circles. However, I have not heard this from his pupils. And even if this were truly accomplished by him, he would not gain much thereby. For eccentricity also necessitates going outside the limits posed by the principles established by Aristotle, those principles to which nothing can be added. It was by me that attention was drawn to this point. In the case of eccentricity, we likewise find that the circular motion of the spheres does not take place around the midmost point of the world, but around an imaginary point that is other than the center of the world. Accordingly, that motion is likewise not a motion taking place around an immobile thing. If, however, someone having no knowledge of astronomy thinks that eccentricity with respect to these imaginary points may be considered — when these points are situated inside[3] the sphere of the moon, as they appear to be at the outset — as equivalent to motion round the midmost point of the world, we would agree to concede this to him if that motion took place round a point in the zone of fire or of air, though in that

2. I.e., Ibn Bājja. Cf. I 74, n. 10. The work to which the text refers is not known at present. On the philosophic criticism of the Ptolemaic system, cf. Translator's Introduction.

3. I.e., beneath.

case that motion would not be around an immobile thing. We will, however, make it clear to him that the measures of eccentricity have been demonstrated in the "Almagest" according to what is assumed there. And the latter-day scientists have given a correct demonstration, regarding which there is no doubt, of how great the measure of these eccentricities is compared with half the diameter of the earth, just as they have set forth all the other distances and dimensions. It has consequently become clear that the eccentric point around which the sun revolves | must of necessity be outside the concavity of the sphere of the moon and beneath the convexity of the sphere of Mercury. Similarly the point around which Mars revolves, I mean to say the center of its eccentric sphere, is outside the concavity of the sphere of Mercury and beneath the convexity of the sphere of Venus. Again the center of the eccentric sphere of Jupiter is at the same distance—I mean between the sphere of Mercury and Venus. As for Saturn, the center of its eccentric sphere is between the spheres of Mars and Jupiter. See now how all these things are remote from natural speculation! All this will become clear to you if you consider the distances and dimensions, known to you, of every sphere and star, as well as the evaluation of all of them by means of half the diameter of the earth so that everything is calculated according to one and the same proportion and the eccentricity of every sphere is not evaluated in relation to the sphere itself.

Even more incongruous and dubious is the fact that in all cases in which one of two spheres is inside the other and adheres to it on every side, while the centers of the two are different, the smaller sphere can move inside the bigger one without the latter being in motion, whereas the bigger sphere cannot move upon any axis whatever without the smaller one being in motion. For whenever the bigger sphere moves, it necessarily, by means of its movement, sets the smaller one in motion, except in the case in which its motion is on axis passing through the two centers. From this demonstrative premise and from the demonstrated fact that vacuum does not exist and from the assumptions regarding eccentricity, it follows necessarily that when the higher sphere is in motion it must move the sphere beneath it with the same motion and around its own center. Now we do not find that this is so. We find rather that neither of the two spheres, the containing and the contained, is set in motion by the movement of the other nor does it move around the other's center or poles, | but that each of them has its own particular motion. Hence necessity obliges the belief that between every two spheres there are bodies other than those of the spheres. Now if this be so, how many obscure points remain? Where will you suppose the centers of

those bodies existing between every two spheres to be? And those bodies should likewise have their own particular motion. Thābit[4] has explained this in a treatise of his and has demonstrated what we have said, namely, that there must be the body of a sphere between every two spheres. All this I did not explain to you when you read under my guidance, for fear of confusing you with regard to that which it was my purpose to make you understand.

As for the inclination and deviation that are spoken of regarding the latitude of Venus and Mercury, I have explained to you by word of mouth and I have shown you that it is impossible to conceive their existence in those bodies. For the rest Ptolemy has said explicitly, as you have seen, that one was unable to do this, stating literally: No one should think that these principles and those similar to them may only be put into effect with difficulty, if his reason for doing this be that he regards that which we have set forth as he would regard things obtained by artifice and the subtlety of art and which may only be realized with difficulty. For human matters should not be compared to those that are divine.[5] This is, as you know, the text of his statement. I have indicated to you the passages from which the true reality of everything I have mentioned to you becomes manifest, except for what I have told you regarding the examination of where the points lie that are the centers of the eccentric circles. For I have never come across anybody who has paid attention to this. However this shall become clear to you through the knowledge of the measure of the diameter of every sphere and what the distance is between the two centers as compared with half the diameter of the earth, according to what has been demonstrated by al-Qabīṣī[6] in the "Epistle Concerning the Distances." If you examine those distances, | the truth of the point to which I have drawn your attention will become clear to you.

Consider now how great these difficulties are. If what Aristotle has stated with regard to natural science is true, there are no epicycles or eccentric circles and everything revolves round the center of the earth. But in that case how can the various motions of the stars come about? Is it in any way possible that motion should be on the one hand circular, uniform, and perfect, and that on the other hand the things that are observable should be observed in consequence of it, unless this be accounted

4. Thābit Ibn Qurra, a well-known mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and translator, who belonged to the pagan community of Ḥarrān. He died in 900.
5. *Almagest* xiii.2.
6. A tenth-century astronomer.

for by making use of one of the two principles[7] or of both of them? This consideration is all the stronger because of the fact that if one accepts everything stated by Ptolemy concerning the epicycle of the moon and its deviation toward a point outside the center of the world and also outside the center of the eccentric circle, it will be found that what is calculated on the hypothesis of the two principles is not at fault by even a minute. The truth of this is attested by the correctness of the calculations – always made on the basis of these principles – concerning the eclipses and the exact determination of their times as well as of the moment when it begins to be dark and of the length of time of the darkness. Furthermore, how can one conceive the retrogradation of a star, together with its other motions, without assuming the existence of an epicycle? On the other hand, how can one imagine a rolling motion in the heavens or a motion around a center that is not immobile? This is the true perplexity.

However, I have already explained to you by word of mouth that all this does not affect the astronomer. For his purpose is not to tell us in which way the spheres truly are, but to posit an astronomical system in which it would be possible for the motions to be circular and uniform and to correspond to what is apprehended through sight, regardless of whether or not things are thus in fact. You know already that in speaking of natural science, Abū Bakr Ibn al-Ṣā'igh[8] expresses a doubt whether Aristotle knew about the eccentricity of the sun and passed over it in silence – treating of what necessarily follows from the sun's inclination, inasmuch as the effect of eccentricity is not distinguishable from | that of inclination – or whether he was not aware of eccentricity. Now the truth is that he was not aware of it and had never heard about it, for in his time mathematics had not been brought to perfection. If, however, he had heard about it, he would have violently rejected it; and if it were to his mind established as true, he would have become most perplexed about all his assumptions on the subject. I shall repeat here what I have said before.[9] All that Aristotle states about that which is beneath the sphere of the moon is in accordance with reasoning;[10] these are things that have a known cause, that follow one upon the other, and concerning which it is clear and manifest at what points wisdom and natural providence are effective. However, regarding all that is in the heavens, man grasps nothing but a small measure of what is mathematical; and you know what is in it. I shall accordingly say in the manner of poetical preciousness: *The heavens are the heavens of the Lord,*

7. I.e., of the epicycles and the eccentric circles. 8. I.e., Ibn Bājja. Cf. n. 2, this chap.
9. Cf. II 22. 10. *qiyās*; cf. n. 1, this chap.

but the earth hath He given to the sons of man.[11] I mean thereby that the deity alone fully knows the true reality, the nature, the substance, the form, the motions, and the causes of the heavens. But He has enabled man to have knowledge of what is beneath the heavens, for that is his world and his dwelling-place in which he has been placed and of which he himself is a part. This is the truth. For it is impossible for us to accede to the points starting from which conclusions may be drawn about the heavens; for the latter are too far away from us and too high in place and in rank. And even the general conclusion that may be drawn from them, namely, that they prove the existence of their Mover, is a matter the knowledge of which cannot be reached by human intellects.[12] And to fatigue the minds with notions that cannot be grasped by them and for the grasp of which they have no instrument, is a defect in one's inborn disposition or some sort of temptation. Let us then stop at a point that is within our capacity, and let us give over the things that cannot be grasped by reasoning[13] to him who was reached by the mighty divine overflow so that it could be fittingly said of him: *With him do I speak mouth to mouth.*[14] That is | the end of what I have to say about this question. It is possible that someone else may find a demonstration by means of which the true reality of what is obscure for me will become clear to him. The extreme predilection that I have for investigating the truth is evidenced by the fact that I have explicitly stated and reported my perplexity regarding these matters as well as by the fact that I have not heard nor do I know a demonstration as to anything concerning them.

CHAPTER 25

Know that our shunning the affirmation of the eternity of the world is not due to a text figuring in the *Torah* according to which the world has been produced in time. For the texts indicating that the world has been produced in time are not more numerous than those indicating that the deity is a body. Nor are the gates of figurative interpretation shut in our faces

11. Ps. 115:16.
12. In Ibn Tibbon's translation the passage has a different meaning: "The general proof from them is that they indicate the existence of their Mover, but the knowledge of other matters concerning them cannot be reached by human intellects."
13. *qiyās.* 14. Num. 12:8.

or impossible of access to us regarding the subject of the creation of the world in time. For we could interpret them as figurative, as we have done when denying His corporeality. Perhaps this would even be much easier to do: we should be very well able to give a figurative interpretation of those texts and to affirm as true the eternity of the world, just as we have given a figurative interpretation of those other texts and have denied that He, may He be exalted, is a body.

Two causes are responsible for our not doing this or believing it. One of them is as follows. That the deity is not a body has been demonstrated; from this it follows necessarily that everything that in its external meaning disagrees with this demonstration must be interpreted figuratively, for it is known that such texts are of necessity fit for figurative interpretation. However, the eternity of the world has not been demonstrated. Consequently in this case the texts ought not to be rejected and figuratively interpreted in order to make prevail an opinion whose contrary can be made to prevail by means of various sorts of arguments. This is one cause.

The second cause is as follows. Our belief that the deity is not | a body destroys for us none of the foundations of the Law and does not give the lie to the claims of any prophet. The only objection to it is constituted by the fact that the ignorant think that this belief is contrary to the text; yet it is not contrary to it, as we have explained, but is intended by the text. On the other hand, the belief in eternity the way Aristotle sees it—that is, the belief according to which the world exists in virtue of necessity, that no nature changes at all, and that the customary course of events cannot be modified with regard to anything—destroys the Law in its principle, necessarily gives the lie to every miracle, and reduces to inanity all the hopes and threats that the Law has held out, unless—by God!—one interprets the miracles figuratively also, as was done by the Islamic internalists;[1] this, however, would result in some sort of crazy imaginings.

If, however, one believed in eternity according to the second opinion we have explained[2]—which is the opinion of Plato—according to which the heavens too are subject to generation and corruption, this opinion would not destroy the foundations of the Law and would be followed not by the lie being given to miracles, but by their becoming admissible. It would also be possible to interpret figuratively the texts in accordance with this opinion.

1. *ahl al-bāṭin.* In Arabic *bāṭin* may mean "the internal sense." The Ismāʿīlī and similar sects are often designated as *ahl al-bāṭin.* An allegorical interpretation of the Qurʾān was part of their faith.
2. Cf. II 13.

And many obscure passages[3] can be found in the texts of the *Torah* and others with which this opinion could be connected or rather by means of which it could be proved. However, no necessity could impel us to do this unless this opinion were demonstrated. In view of the fact that it has not been demonstrated, we shall not favor this opinion, nor shall we at all heed that other opinion, but rather shall take the texts according to their external sense and shall say: The Law has given us knowledge of a matter the grasp of which is not within our power, and the miracle attests to the correctness of our claims.

Know that with a belief in the creation of the world in time, all the miracles become possible and the Law becomes possible, and all questions that may be asked on this subject, vanish. Thus it might be said: Why did God give prophetic revelation to this one and not to that? Why did | God give this Law to this particular nation, and why did He not legislate to the others? Why did He legislate at this particular time, and why did He not legislate before it or after? Why did He impose these commandments and these prohibitions? Why did He privilege the prophet with the miracles mentioned in relation to him and not with some others? What was God's aim in giving this Law? Why did He not, if such was His purpose,[4] put the accomplishment of the commandments and the nontransgression of the prohibitions into our nature? If this were said, the answer to all these questions would be that it would be said: He wanted it this way; or His wisdom required it this way. And just as He brought the world into existence, having the form it has, when He wanted to, without our knowing His will with regard to this or in what respect there was wisdom in His particularizing the forms of the world and the time of its creation—in the same way we do not know His will or the exigency of His wisdom that caused all the matters, about which questions have been posed above, to be particularized. If, however, someone says that the world is as it is in virtue of necessity, it would be a necessary obligation to ask all those questions; and there would be no way out of them except through a recourse to unseemly answers in which there would be combined the giving the lie to, and the annulment of, all the external meanings of the Law with regard to which no intelligent man has any doubt that they are to be taken in their

3. It seems gramatically more correct to interpret the Arabic word "sh.b.h." as being *shubah*, the plural of *shubho*, "an obscure passage," rather than as *shibh*, a singular meaning "analogy." Ibn Tibbon's translation and that of Munk, which conforms to it, seem to be based on the second interpretation.

4. I.e., if He wished us to accomplish the commandments and not to transgress the prohibitions.

external meanings. It is then because of this that this opinion is shunned[5] and that the lives of virtuous men have been and will be spent in investigating this question. For if creation in time were demonstrated—if only as Plato understands creation—all the overhasty[6] claims made to us on this point by the philosophers would become void. In the same way, if the philosophers would succeed in demonstrating eternity as Aristotle understands it, the Law as a whole would become void, and a shift to other opinions would take place. I have thus explained to you that everything is bound up with this problem. Know this. |

CHAPTER 26

I have seen a statement of *Rabbi Eliezer the Great*, figuring in the celebrated *Chapters*[1] known as *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*, which is the strangest statement I have seen made by one who follows the Law of *Moses our Master*. Hear the text of the statement he made. He says:[2] *Wherefrom were the heavens created? From the light of His garment. He took some of it, stretched it like a cloth, and thus they were extending continually, as it is said: Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment. Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.*[3] *Wherefrom was the earth created? From the snow under the throne of His glory. He took some of it and threw it, as it is said: For He saith to the snow, Be thou earth.*[4] This is the text of the statement made there. Would that I knew what that *Sage* believed. Did he believe that it is impossible that something should come into being out of nothing and that there must necessarily be matter out of which that which is generated is produced? Did he for this reason seek to find *wherefrom were created* the heavens and the earth? However, whatever results from this answer, he ought to be asked: *Wherefrom was the light of His garment created? Wherefrom was the snow under the throne of glory created? Wherefrom was the throne of glory itself created?* If, however, he wished to signify by *the light of His garment* an uncreated thing and similarly by the *throne of glory* something uncreated, this would be a great incongruity. For he would have admitted thereby the eternity of the world, if only as it is

5. I.e., the affirmation of the eternity of the world a parte ante. 6. Or: incoherent.
1. *Peraqim* in Hebrew. 2. Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, III.
3. Ps. 104:2. 4. Job 37:6.

conceived according to Plato's opinion. As for the *throne of glory* belonging to the created things, the *Sages* state this expressly, but in a strange manner. For they say that it was created before the creation of the world.[5] But the scriptural texts, in connection with it, do not refer in any way to creation, with the exception of *David's* statement: *The Lord | hath established His throne in the heavens*,[6] which statement admits very well of figurative interpretation. However, the throne's eternity a parte post is expressly stated: *Thou, O Lord, sittest for all eternity, Thy throne is from generation to generation.*[7] Now if *Rabbi Eliezer* believed in the eternity a parte ante of the *throne*, the latter must have been an attribute of God, and not a created body. But how is it possible for a thing to be generated from an attribute? Strangest of all is his saying: *the light of His garment*. All in all, this statement will confuse very much indeed the belief of a learned man who adheres to the Law. No persuasive figurative interpretation with regard to it has become clear to me. I have only mentioned it to you in order that you should make no mistake about it. However, its author has in any case rendered us a great service by making it quite clear that the matter of the heavens is other than that of the earth and that they are two altogether distinct matters. One of them is attributed to Him, may He be exalted, because of its sublimity and high rank, and this is *the light of His garment;* the other matter is remote from His light and splendor, may He be exalted, and this is the lowly matter that the author of the statement makes out to derive *from the snow under the throne of glory*. This has made me interpret figuratively the passage of the *Torah*, *And there was under his feet, as it were, a work of the whiteness of sapphire stone*,[8] as meaning that they apprehended in this *prophetic vision* the true reality of the inferior first matter. For *Onqelos* makes out, as I have explained to you,[9] that *his feet* refers to the *throne*. And this clearly indicates that the whiteness, which is under the *throne*, is the terrestrial matter. Thus *Rabbi Eliezer* repeated the very same thing and made it clear—I mean the fact that there are two matters, a high and an inferior one, and that the matter of the universe is not one. This is a great mystery, and do not think disdainfully of the fact that the greatest *Sages of Israel* have made a clear statement about it. For it is one of the mysteries of being and a *mystery among the mysteries of the Torah*.

They say in *Bereshith Rabbah: Rabbi Eliezer says: The creation of everything that is in the heavens derives from the heavens, and the creation*

5. Cf. Genesis Rabbah, I; B.T., Pesaḥim, 54a; B.T., Nedarim, 39b.
6. Ps. 103:19. 7. Lam. 5:19. 8. Exod. 24:10. 9. Cf. I 28.

of everything that is | in the earth derives from the earth.[10] Consider how this *Sage* has made it clear to you that the matter of everything that is on earth—I mean to say, of everything that is beneath the sphere of the moon—is one common matter, and that the matter of all the heavens and of what is in them is another matter and not the same as the one just mentioned. In *his Chapters*, [Rabbi Eliezer] clearly states this one additional subtlety. I mean to say the sublimity of that matter and its nearness to Him and the defectiveness of the other and also the place where it is located. Know this.

CHAPTER 27

I have already made it clear to you that the belief in the production of the world is necessarily the foundation of the entire Law. However, the belief in its passing-away after it has come into being and been generated is not, in our opinion, in any respect a foundation of the Law, and none of our beliefs would be hurt through the belief in its permanent duration. Perhaps you will say: Has it not been demonstrated that everything that comes into being passes away?; if then the world is generated it will pass away. Know then that this need not apply to us. For we do not assert that it has been generated according to the rule applying to the generation of the natural things that follow a natural order. For what is generated in accordance with the course of nature[1] must of necessity pass away in accordance with the course of nature. For just as its nature had required that at first it should not exist in this particular way whereas after that it has come to exist in that way, it necessarily also requires that it should not exist in that way forever. For it is established as true that this mode of existence is not permanently attached to it by its nature. However, in view of our claim, based on the Law, that things exist and perish according to His will, may He be exalted, and not in virtue of necessity, | it is not necessary for us to profess in consequence of that opinion that when He, may He be exalted, brings into existence a thing that had not existed, He must necessarily cause this existent to pass away. Rather does the matter inevitably depend on His will: if He wills, He causes the thing to pass away; and if He wills, He

10. Genesis Rabbah, X; cf. B.T., Yoma, 54b.
1. Literally: the natural course.

causes it to last; or it depends on what is required by His wisdom. It is accordingly possible that He should cause it to last for ever and ever and to endure as He Himself, may He be exalted, endures.

You know that while the *Sages* state explicitly that the *throne of glory* has been created, they never say that it will become nonexistent. No *prophet* and no *Sage* has ever been heard to say that the *throne of glory* will pass away or become nonexistent. Rather does the text of Scripture state that it will last forever. The same applies to the souls of the virtuous; for according to our opinion, they are created, but will never become nonexistent. According to certain opinions of those who follow the literal sense of the *Midrashim*,[2] their bodies[3] will also be in a state of perpetual felicity for ever and ever – an opinion resembling that of those whose belief as to the inhabitants of Paradise is generally known.

To sum up: Speculation obliges us to affirm that the passing-away of the world need not necessarily follow. Thus it only remains to examine this question in the light of the information imparted by the prophets and the *Sages*. Have they given information that this world will without any doubt pass away, or have they not? Most of the vulgar among us believe that such information has been given and that all this world will pass away. However, I shall explain to you that this is not so, but that there are many texts that signify that it will last forever. All the passages from whose external sense it appears that the world will pass away, are most manifestly parables, as I shall explain. If, however, one of the externalists refuses to admit this and says that he must necessarily believe in the passing-away of the world, he should not be dealt with illiberally. However, he needs to be informed that the world's passing-away does not necessarily follow from the fact of its having been created in time, but that he believes in this, as he thinks, by way of accepting the veracity of the one who stated | that parable, which he takes in its external sense. From the point of view of the Law, there is no harm in this in any respect whatever.

2. In the text: *Midrashoth*. 3. Or: corpses.

CHAPTER 28

Many of the adherents of our Law have thought that *Solomon*, peace be on him, believed in the eternity of the world. It is amazing that it should be imagined that a man belonging to the adherents of the Law of *Moses our Master* believed in the eternity of the world. If, however, someone deems—may God protect us!—that in this he abandoned the opinions of the Law, how was it that all the prophets and the *Sages* accepted this from him and did not attack him on this point or blame him after his death, as had to be done in connection with the *alien women* and on other counts? This vain imagining was occasioned by the statement of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed; [People] wanted to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes because its words incline to those of the heretics.*[1] This is undoubtedly so; I mean to say, in this book, taken in its external sense, there are passages that incline to opinions foreign to those of the Law and that need a figurative interpretation. However, the affirmation of the eternity of the world does not belong to them. There is no text in it indicating this, and no text whatever is to be found in it that states explicitly that the world is eternal a parte ante. However, some texts in it indicate that it is eternal a parte post, which is true. When people saw texts indicating that the world is eternal a parte post, they thought that he [Solomon] believed that the world was not created in time. This is not so.

The text in the book regarding the eternity a parte post of the world reads: *And the earth abideth for ever* [*leᶜolam*].[2] But those who were not aware of this subtlety resorted to the explanation: during the time predetermined for it. And they explain similarly His words, may He be exalted, *Yet all the days of the earth,*[3] as referring to the | predetermined length of its life. Would that I knew what is said with regard to *David's* words: *Who didst establish the earth upon its foundations, that it should not be moved for ever and ever* [*ᶜolam vaᶜed*].[4] For if the words, *ᶜolam vaᶜed,*[5] do not point to eternity a parte post, this would mean that the deity has a certain duration. For the scriptural text says with reference to His eternity a parte post, may He be exalted: *The Lord shall reign for ever and ever* [*le ᶜolam vaᶜed*].[6] You know that the word *ᶜolam* does not signify eternity a parte post unless it be conjoined with the word *ᶜad,* which may come

1. Leviticus Rabbah, XXVIII; Midrash Qoheleth, 1:3. 2. Eccles. 1:4.
3. Gen. 8:22. 4. Ps. 104:5. 5. Meaning "for ever and ever."
6. Exod. 15:18.

either after it – as in the scriptural expression: *ʿolam vaʿed* – or before it – as in the scriptural expression: *ʿad ʿolam*. Consequently *Solomon's* statement:[7] *abideth for ever* [*le ʿolam*], means less than *David's* statement:[8] *that it should not be moved for ever and ever* [*ʿolam vaʿed*].[9] *David*, peace be on him, likewise makes clear and manifest the eternity a parte post of the heavens and the permanence in an immutable state of their statutes and of all that is in them. For he says: *Praise ye the Lord from the heavens, and so on. For He commanded and they were created. He hath established them for ever and ever; He hath made a statute, which shall not be transgressed.*[10] He means by this that the statutes, which He has laid down, will never be changed. For the word *statute* alludes to the *statutes of heaven and earth*,[11] which have been mentioned previously. However, he makes it clear that they are created, saying: *For He commanded, and they were created.* And *Jeremiah*, peace be on him, says: *Who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the statutes of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, and so on. If these statutes depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation.*[12] Thus he has likewise clearly stated that they – I mean these statutes – even though created, shall not *depart*.

Thus if this matter is pursued, this doctrine will be found not only in *Solomon's* words. On the other hand, *Solomon* himself has likewise stated that these works of the deity – I mean the world and what is in it – even though they are made, are permanently established according to their nature for ever. For he says: *That whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it.*[13] Thus he imparts in | this *verse* the information that the world is a work of the deity and that it is eternal a parte post. He also states the cause of its being eternal a parte post; namely, in his words: *nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it.* For this is the cause of its *being for ever*. It is as if he said that the thing that is changed, is changed because of a deficiency in it that should be made good or because of some excess that is not needed and should be got rid of. Now the works of the deity are most perfect, and with regard to them there is no possibility of an excess or a deficiency. Accordingly they are of necessity permanently established as they are, for there is no possibility of something calling for a change in them. He has also, as it were, stated an end for what

7. See above in this chapter. 8. See above in this chapter.
9. Solomon's statment is less strong than David's because he uses the expression *leʿolam* to signify "perpetual duration," and not the expression *ʿolam vaʿed* employed by David.
10. Ps. 148:1, 5, 6. 11. Jer. 33:25. 12. Jer. 31:34–35. 13. Eccles. 3:14.

has come to exist or given an excuse for what changes, saying in the final part of the *verse*: *And God hath so made it, that they should fear before Him*[14] – he refers to the production in time of miracles. In saying after that, *That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been; and God seeketh that which is pursued*,[15] the author states that He, may He be exalted, desires that that which exists should continue and that its various parts should be consecutive to one another. As for his mention of the perfection of the acts of the deity and of its being impossible to add or to take away from them, the Master of those who know had already clearly stated this, saying: *The Rock, His work is perfect.*[16] He means that all His works – I mean to say His creatures – are most perfect, that no deficiency at all is commingled with them, that there is no superfluity in them and nothing that is not needed. Similarly all that is being accomplished for and by the created things is absolute justice and follows from the requirement of wisdom, as shall be made clear in some of the chapters of this Treatise. |

CHAPTER 29

Know that if one does not understand the language of a human being whom one hears speaking, one indubitably knows that he speaks, but without knowing what he intends to say. Something of even graver import may occur: sometimes one may hear in someone else's speech words that in the language of the speaker indicate a certain meaning, and by accident that word indicates in the language of the hearer the contrary of what the speaker intended. Thus the hearer will think that the signification that the word has for the speaker is the same as its signification for him. For instance if an Arab hears a Hebrew man saying *ʾaba* [*he wishes*], the Arab will think that he speaks of an individual who was reluctant with regard to some matter and refused [ʾabā] it.[1] However, the Hebrew only wished to convey that the individual was pleased with the matter and wished it. This is similar to what happens to the multitude with regard to the speech of the prophets, excepting certain portions that they do not understand at all. As it says: *the vision of all this is become unto you as the words of a book that*

14. Eccles. 3:14. 15. Eccles. 3:15. 16. Deut. 32:4.

1. The two words have the same radicals. In Hebrew *ʾaba* means "to wish"; in Arabic *ʾabā* means "to be reluctant" and "to refuse."

is sealed.[2] With regard to other portions, they understand what is the contrary of, or contradictory to, the true meaning. As it says: *And ye have perverted the words of the living God.*[3] Know that every prophet has a kind of speech peculiar to him, which is, as it were, the language of that individual, which the prophetic revelation peculiar to him causes him to speak to those who understand him.

After this preface, you ought to know that in the speech of *Isaiah*, peace be on him, it very frequently occurs – whereas in the speech of other prophets it rarely occurs – that when he speaks of the fall of a dynasty or the destruction of a great religious community,[4] he uses such expressions as: the stars have fallen, the heavens were rolled up, the sun was blackened, the earth was devastated and quaked, and many similar | figurative expressions. This is similar to what is said by the Arabs with regard to someone whom a great misfortune has befallen: his heavens were cast upside down upon his earth. In the same way when he describes the prosperity of a dynasty and the renewal of happiness, he calls them: an increase of the light of the sun and the moon, a renewal of the heavens and a renewal of the earth, and so forth; just as when describing the destruction of an individual or a religious community or a city, they ascribe to God in relation to the latter the states of anger and extreme wrath; and when describing the prosperity of a people, they ascribe to God the states of joy and gladness. Accordingly they say about states of anger with regard to men or communities: *He went forth* and *He went down* and *He roared* and *He thundered* and *He gave forth His voice*, and many other similar expressions; they say likewise: *He ordered* and *He said* and *He acted* and *He did*, and so on, as I shall set forth. Similarly when a prophet gives information as to the destruction of the people of a certain locality, he sometimes substitutes for the people of that locality, the whole human species. Thus *Isaiah*, peace be on him, says: *And the Lord will remove man far away*;[5] he refers to the destruction of *Israel*. And *Zephaniah* says on this subject: *And I will cut off man from off the face of the earth. And I will stretch out My hand upon Judah.*[6] Know this also.

After having interpreted this language to you in a general way, I shall show you the correctness of this interpretation and the demonstration thereof. When God had given *Isaiah*, peace be on him, prophetic inspiration regarding the fall of the *Babylonian* dynasty, the destruction of *Sennacherib* and of *Nebuchadnezzar* who rose up after him, and the end of his kingdom; and when that prophet began to describe the disaster that

2. Isa. 29:11. 3. Jer. 23:36. 4. Or: nation. 5. Isa. 6:12. 6. Zeph. 1:3–4.

befell them at the end of their reigns, their defeats, and the misfortunes that came upon them and were such misfortunes as come upon all the defeated who flee the victory of the sword—he said: *For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.*[7] And he also said in the course of the same description: *Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of her place, in the wrath of | the Lord of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger.*[8] I do not think that there has been anyone in whom ignorance, blindness, and the inclination to adhere to the external sense of figurative expressions and of rhetorical speeches, have reached such a point that he thought that the stars of the heavens and the light of the sun and of the moon have been changed when the kingdom of Babylon came to an end, or that the earth was removed from its center,[9] as was stated. All of this is merely a description of the state of someone put to flight; for without any doubt, he sees all light as black, finds everything that is sweet bitter, and imagines that the earth has narrowed for him and that the heavens are closed[10] over him. Similarly when he began to describe the state of extreme humiliation and servitude to which *Israel* would be reduced throughout the time of *the wicked Sennacherib*—when he would capture *all the fortified cities of Judah*,[11] take the people captive, and put them to flight, and when various calamities would befall them in quick succession at his hands and the whole *land of Israel* perish through him, he said: *Terror, and the pit, and the trap, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.*[12] *And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the terror shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the trap; for the windows on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is broken, broken down, the earth is crumbled in pieces, the earth trembleth and tottereth. The earth reeleth to and fro like a drunkard, and so on.*[13] At the conclusion of this passage, when he began to describe what God would do to *Sennacherib*, the destruction of his proud kingdom before *Jerusalem*, and the shame that God would cause him to suffer there, he said, speaking in parables: *Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of hosts will reign, and so on.*[14] *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him, has given a very good interpretation of this passage,

7. Isa. 13:10. 8. Isa. 13:13. 9. Or: its position.
10. Or, according to the translation of Ibn Tibbon, who may have had a somewhat different Arabic text: are upset.
11. Isa. 36:1. 12. Or: *the land*. 13. Isa. 24:17–20. 14. Isa. 24:23.

saying that when that which was going to come to pass before *Jerusalem* would happen to *Sennacherib*, the idolaters would know that that was a divine act and would be astonished and confused. For he, may peace be on him, says:[15] | *They who worship the moon will be ashamed, and they who bow down to the sun will be humbled, for the Kingdom of God will be revealed, and so on.*

Again when he began to describe how great shall be the stable security of *Israel* after the destruction of *Sennacherib*, as well as the fertility and cultivation of their lands and the good fortune of their dynasty brought about by *Hezekiah*, he said, speaking in parables, that the light of the sun and of the moon would increase. For whereas, as has been mentioned, with reference to someone put to flight, the light of the sun and of the moon goes out and becomes darkness, their light increases according to him who is victorious. For you will always find that when a great misfortune befalls a man, his eyes are darkened and the light of his sight is not clear, because the visual spirit is disturbed by the superfluity of vapors and also because it is weak and there is not much of it in consequence of the greatness of the sorrow and the contraction of the soul. On the contrary, when there is joy, when the soul expands outwards and the spirit is clear, man sees as it were that the light is stronger than it was. He says: *For, O people that dwellest in Zion at Jerusalem, thou shalt weep no more, and so on.*[16] The conclusion of the passage is: *Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of the seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the bruise of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.*[17] He refers to their being raised from the fall *caused by the wicked Sennacherib.* As for his words, *as the light of seven days*, the commentators have said that he means thereby the multiplicity of light, for the Hebrews denote multiplicity by the number seven. However, it occurs to me that he refers to *the seven days of the dedication of the Temple*, which took place in the days of *Solomon.* For the religious community[18] had never had such good fortune, happiness, and general joy, as in those days. He says accordingly that their good fortune and happiness will be then as it was in those seven days. | When he described the destruction of *wicked Edom*, which oppressed *Israel*, he said: *Their slain also shall be cast out, and the stench of their carcasses shall come up, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall moulder away, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down,*

15. In the Aramaic translation attributed to him. 16. Isa. 30:19.
17. Isa. 30:26. 18. Or: nation.

as a leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword hath drunk its fill in heaven; behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and so on.[19] Consider, you who are able to see, whether there is anything in these texts that is obscure or leads one to imagine that he describes a future state of the heavens, whether this description is anything but a parable signifying the end of their dynasty, the withdrawal of God's protection from them, ill luck befalling them, and the shrinking-away of the position of their great dignitaries – all this being due to happen within a very short time and with very little effort. It is as if he said that individuals who were like the stars because of their fixed position, their high rank, and their remoteness from the change, would fall down within a very short time, *as a leaf falleth off from the vine, and so on.* This is too clear even to be mentioned in a Treatise like this. Nor then should it be expatiated upon. But necessity requires this; for the common people and even some of those who are supposed to belong to the elite use this *verse* as a proof, without considering what comes before it and after it and without paying attention to the context in which it occurs; as if it contained information given to us in the *Torah* about the end of the heavens, just as there is given to us in it information about their coming to be.

Again when *Isaiah* began to give *Israel* the good tidings about the destruction of *Sennacherib* and of all the nations and the kings that were with him, as is well known, and the victory that would be won over them with the help of God and no one else, he said to them, speaking in parables: See how those heavens are rent, this earth worn out, and how those who live on it die away, while you are succored. It is as if he said that those who have extended over the whole earth and who were thought to be as firmly established as the heavens, speaking hyperbolically, would quickly perish and disappear like smoke, | while their visible monuments, which were as firmly established as the earth, would crumble like a worn-out garment. In the beginning of the passage he says: *For the Lord hath comforted Zion; He hath comforted all her waste places, and so on. Attend unto Me, O My people, and so on. My righteousness is near, My salvation is gone forth, and so on. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; But My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished.*[20]

With regard to the return of the *king of Israel*, his stability, and his

19. Isa. 34:3–5. 20. Isa. 51:3–6.

permanence, he says that God will produce anew the heavens and the earth. For in his speech he frequently refers to the reign of a king as if it were a world existing especially for the king, I mean to say a heaven and an earth. Accordingly when he begins *the consolations*, saying: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you*,[21] and what immediately follows – he goes on to say: *And I have put My words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of My hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion: Thou art My people.*[22]

With regard to the permanence of the possession by *Israel* of kingly rule and to the latter's departure from the great and celebrated potentates, he says: *For the mountains shall depart, and so on*,[23] With regard to the permanence of the *King* that is the *Messiah* and to *Israel's* kingdom not being destroyed after that, he says: *Thy sun shall no more go down, and so on.*[24] After that *Isaiah* goes on in his speech consistently using those figurative expressions, for they appear thus to him who understands the meaning of those speeches. Thus describing the state of *Exile* and its various particularities and thereupon the restoration of the kingdom and the disappearance of all those sorrows, he says, speaking in parables: I shall create another heaven and another earth; and those that are now will be forgotten and their traces effaced. Then he explains this in continuity, saying: When I have said "I shall create," I meant thereby that I shall produce for you, instead of those sorrows and hardships, a state of constant joy and gladness so that the | former sorrows will not be remembered. Listen to the arrangement of the notions and the mutual connection of the *verses* indicating these notions: how in the first beginning of this passage, he says: *I will make mention of the loving-kindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord, and so on.*[25] Then he described, in the first place, the bounties that He, may He be exalted, bestows upon us, saying: *And He bore them and carried them all the days of old, and so on*,[26] and what immediately follows. Then he describes our disobedience, saying: *But they rebelled and grieved His holy spirit*,[27] and what immediately follows. Then he describes the enemy obtaining dominion over us, saying: *Our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary; we were ever*,[28] and what immediately follows. Then he intercedes for us, saying: *Be not wroth very sore, O Lord*,[29] and what immediately follows. Then he sets forth how we have deserved the great misfortunes that have befallen us, because of our

21. Isa. 51:12. 22. Isa. 51:16. 23. Isa. 54:10. 24. Isa. 60:20.
25. Isa. 63:7. 26. Isa. 63:9. 27. Isa. 63:10. 28. Isa. 63:18–19.
29. Isa. 64:8.

having received a call to truth and having not responded; he says: *I offered Myself to be sought of them that asked not for Me, and so on.*[30] Then he promises pardon and pity, saying: *Thus saith the Lord, As when new wine is found in the cluster, and so on,*[31] and what immediately follows. Then he threatens with punishment those who have wronged us, saying: *Behold, My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry, and so on.*[32] Then he follows this by stating that the beliefs of this religious community shall be the right ones, that it will be a blessing on the earth, and that it will forget all the various above-mentioned vicissitudes. This is the text of what he says: *And He shall call His servants by another name; so that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself by the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth, because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from Mine eyes. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and so on.*[33]

Accordingly the whole matter has become clear and manifest to you. For after saying, *For, behold, I create | new heavens and a new earth,* he immediately explains this by saying: *For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.* After this preamble, he says: Just as those states of faith and of joy in that faith which I promised you to create, will always be permanently established – for the faith in God and the joy in that faith are states that cannot cease or ever be altered in all those who have attained them – and therefore he says:[34] Just as this state of faith and of joy in it, as to which I promised that it will extend over the earth, will be firmly established and permanent, so will your progeny and your name endure. That is his statement which follows: *For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.*[35] For it sometimes happens that the *seed* remains while the *name* does not. Thus you can find many peoples that are indubitably the seed of *Persia* or *Greece*, but are not known by a special name, being absorbed in another religious community.[36] This, to my mind, is likewise an indication of the eternity of the Law because of which we have a special *name*.

Inasmuch as these figurative expressions occur often in *Isaiah*, I have

30. Isa. 65:1. 31. Isa. 65:8. 32. Isa. 65:13. 33. Isa. 65:15–19.
34. After an anacoluthon, Maimonides repeats most of the sentence.
35. Isa. 66:22. 36. Or: nation.

examined all of them. However, they also occur sometimes in the speech of others. Thus *Jeremiah*, when describing the destruction of *Jerusalem* caused *by the sins of our forefathers*, says: *I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was waste and void, and so on.*[37] *Ezekiel*, describing the ruin of the kingdom of Egypt and the destruction of *Pharaoh* at the hands of *Nebuchadnezzar*, says: *And when I shall extinguish thee, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof black; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make black over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God.*[38] *Joel, son of Pethuel*, speaking | of the multitude of locusts that came in his days, says: *Before them the earth quaketh, the heavens tremble; the sun and the moon are become black, and the stars withdraw their shining.*[39] *Amos*, describing the destruction of *Samaria*, says: *That I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day; and I will turn your feasts, and so on.*[40] *Micah*, referring to the ruin of *Samaria*, constantly uses the well-known rhetorical expressions: *For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of His place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten, and so on.*[41] *Haggai*, referring to the fall of the *kingdom of the Persians and the Medes*, says: *And I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations.*[42] When, during *Joab's* expedition against *Edom*, [Scripture] begins to describe the weakness and lowly state of the religious community[43] as it was before and their being vanquished and put to flight, and intercedes for their victory now, it says: *Thou hast made the earth to shake, thou hast cleft it: heal the branches thereof; for it tottereth.*[44] In order to signify that we should have no fear when the nations are destroyed and perish, inasmuch as we put our trust in His help, may He be exalted, and not in our fighting and our strength — being, as it says, *a people saved by the Lord*[45] — it says: *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth do change, and though the mountains be moved into the heart of the seas.*[46] In the description of the drowning of the Egyptians, the following occurs: *The waters saw Thee; they were in pain; the depths also trembled. The voice of Thy thunder was in the whirlpool, and so on; the earth trembled and shook.*[47] *Was the Lord displeased with the rivers, and so on.*[48] *Smoke arose up in His nostrils, and so on.*[49] Similarly in the *Song of Deborah: The earth trembled, and so*

37. Jer. 4:23. 38. Ezek. 32:7–8. 39. Joel 2:10. 40. Amos 8:9–10.
41. Mic. 1:3–4. 42. Hag. 2:6–7. 43. Or: nation. 44. Ps. 60:4.
45. Deut. 33:29. 46. Ps. 46:3. 47. Ps. 77:17 and 19.
48. Hab. 3:8. 49. Ps. 18:9.

on.[50] There occur many passages of this kind. Draw an analogy from what has been mentioned to what has not.

As for the passage in *Joel: And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever | shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, and so on.*[51] According to me the most probable interpretation is that he describes the destruction of *Sennacherib* before *Jerusalem.* If, however, you do not wish to accept this, it may be held to be a description of the destruction of *Gog* before *Jerusalem in the days of the King Messiah,* though the only things mentioned in this passage are great slaughter, the burning of the fires, and the eclipse of the two luminaries. Perhaps you will say: How can the day of the destruction of *Sennacherib* be called *the great and terrible day of the Lord* according to our interpretation? Know therefore that every day in which a great victory or a great disaster comes to pass is called *the great and terrible day of the Lord.* Thus *Joel* said of the day when the locusts come upon them: *For great is the day of the Lord and very terrible; and who can abide it?*[52]

The notion toward which we are driving has already been made clear; namely, that the passing-away of this world, a change of the state in which it is, or a thing's changing its nature and with that the permanence of this change, are not affirmed in any prophetic text or in any statement of the *Sages* either. For when the latter say, *The world lasts six thousand years, and one thousand years it is a waste,*[53] they do not have in mind total extinction of being. For his expression, *and one thousand years it is a waste,* indicates that time remains. Besides, it is the saying of an *individual* that corresponds to a certain manner of thinking. On the other hand, you constantly find as the opinion of all *Sages* and as a foundation on which every one among *the Sages of the Mishnah and the Sages of the Talmud* bases his proofs, his saying: *There is nothing new under the sun,*[54] and the view that nothing new will be produced in any respect or from any cause whatever. Even he who takes *new heavens and a new earth* to mean what people think it means, says: *Even the heavens and the earth that will be created in the future are already created and subsist, for it is said: they subsist before me. It is not said: they will subsist, but: they subsist.*[55] And he quotes in proof his saying:

50. Judg. 5:4. 51. Joel 3:3–5. 52. Joel 2:11.
53. B.T., Rosh Hashanah, 31a; B.T., Sanhedrin, 97a. 54. Eccles. 1:9.
55. Genesis Rabbah, I. The text known to us differs considerably from Maimonides' quotation.

There is nothing new under the sun. Do not | think that this is in contradiction to what I have explained. For it is possible that he means that the nature that will necessitate in time the states of existence that have been promised, is created since the *six days of the Beginning*. And this is true.

I have said that a thing does not change its nature in such a way that the change is permanent merely in order to be cautious with regard to the miracles. For although the rod was turned into a serpent, the water into blood, and the pure and noble hand became white[56] without a natural cause that necessitated this, these and similar things were not permanent and did not become another nature. But as they, *may their memory be blessed*, say: *The world goes its customary way.*[57] This is my opinion, and this is what ought to be believed. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, have made a very strange statement about miracles, the text of which you will find in *Bereshith Rabbah* and in *Midrash Qoheleth*. This notion consists in their holding the view that miracles too are something that is, in a certain respect, in nature. They say that when God created that which exists and stamped upon it the existing natures, He put it into these natures that all the miracles that occurred would be produced in them at the time when they occurred. According to this opinion, the sign of a prophet consists in God's making known to him the time when he must make his proclamation, and thereupon a certain thing is effected according to what was put into its nature when first it received its particular impress. If this statement is as you will see it,[58] it indicates the superiority of the man who made it and the fact that he found it extremely difficult to admit that a nature may change after the *Work of the Beginning*[59] or that another volition may supervene after that nature has been established in a definite way. For instance, he seems to consider that it was put into the nature of water to be continuous and always to flow from above downwards except at | the time of the drowning of the Egyptians; it was a particularity of that water to become divided. I have drawn your attention to the spirit of that passage and to the fact that all this serves to avoid having to admit the coming-into-being of something new. It is said in the passage:[60] *Rabbi Jonathan said: The Holy One, blessed be He, has posed conditions to the sea: [to wit,] that it should divide before Israel. That is [the meaning of the words]: And the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared.*[61] *Rabbi Jeremiah,*

56. I.e., leprous. 57. B.T., ʿAbodah Zarah, 54b.
58. Scil., when you look up this text.
59. The expression used by Maimonides has been translated elsewhere as "Account of the Beginning."
60. Genesis Rabbah, V. 61. Exod. 14:27.

son of Elazar, said: The Holy One, blessed be He, has posed conditions not only to the sea, but to all that has been created in the six days of the Beginning. That is [the meaning of the words]: I, even My hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded.[62] *I have commanded the sea to divide; the fire not to harm Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; the lions not to harm Daniel; and the fish to spit out Jonah.* All the other miracles can be explained in an analogous manner.

The matter has now become clear to you and the doctrine epitomized. Namely, we agree with Aristotle with regard to one half of his opinion and we believe that what exists is eternal a parte post and will last forever with that nature which He, may He be exalted, has willed; that nothing in it will be changed in any respect unless it be in some particular of it miraculously – although He, may He be exalted, has the power to change the whole of it, or to annihilate it, or to annihilate any nature in it that He wills. However, that which exists has had a beginning, and at first nothing at all existed except God. His wisdom required that He should bring creation into existence at the time when He did do it, and that what He has brought into existence should not be annihilated nor any of its natures changed except in certain particulars that He willed to change; about some of these we know, whereas about others that will be changed in the future we do not know. This is our opinion and the basis of our Law. Aristotle, on the other hand, thinks that just as the world is eternal a parte post and will not pass away, it is also eternal a parte ante and has not been produced. Now we have already said and explained that this doctrine can be arranged in a coherent way only through a recourse to the law of necessity and that necessity contains | a presumptuous assertion with regard to the deity, as we have explained.

As the exposition has finally reached this point, we shall now put in a chapter that shall likewise give several indications as to texts concerned with the *Account of the Beginning*. For the first purpose of this Treatise is to explain what can be explained of the *Account of the Beginning* and of the *Account of the Chariot*. We shall put in this chapter after we have first set forth two preambles of general import. One of these is as follows: Not everything mentioned in the *Torah* concerning the *Account of the Beginning* is to be taken in its external sense as the vulgar imagine. For if the matter were such, the men of knowledge would not have been chary[63]

62. Isa. 45:12.

63. With the medieval Hebrew translators and with Munk, I read *ḍanna* instead of *ẓanna*, which figures in the manuscripts.

of divulging knowledge with regard to it, and the *Sages* would not have expatiated on its being kept secret and on preventing the talk about it in the presence of the vulgar. For the external sense of these texts leads either to a grave corruption of the imagination and to giving vent to evil opinions with regard to the deity, or to an absolute denial of the action of the deity and to disbelief in the foundations of the Law. The correct thing to do is to refrain, if one lacks all knowledge of the sciences, from considering these texts merely with the imagination. One should not act like the wretched *preachers* and commentators who think that a knowledge of the interpretation of words is science and in whose opinion wordiness and length of speech add to perfection. On the other hand it is obligatory to consider them with what is truly the intellect after one has acquired perfection in the demonstrative sciences and knowledge of the secrets of the prophets. However, as I have explained several times in our Commentary on the *Mishnah*,[64] none of those who know something of it should divulge it. And they say explicitly: *As from the beginning of the book up to here, the glory of God [requires] to conceal the thing*.[65] They say it at the end of what is said concerning the *sixth day* [of the Beginning]. Thus what we have said has become clear. However, inasmuch as the divine commandment necessarily obliges everyone who has obtained a certain | perfection to let it overflow toward others – as we shall make clear in the chapters on prophecy that follow – every man endowed with knowledge who has come to possess an understanding of something pertaining to these secrets, either through his own speculation or through being conducted toward this by a guide, must indubitably say something. It is, however, forbidden to be explicit about it. He must accordingly make the secret appear in flashes. Many such flashes, indications, and pointers occur in the sayings of some of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, but these sayings are mixed up with the sayings of others and with sayings of another kind. For this reason you will find that with regard to these *mysteries*, I always mention the single saying on which the matter is based, while I leave the rest to those whom it befits that this should be left to them.

The second preamble: As we have said, the prophets use in their speeches equivocal words and words that are not intended to mean what they indicate according to their first signification, the word being mentioned because of its derivation. For instance, the words *maqqel shaqed [a rod of an almond tree]*[66] are used because from this indication one may go on to

64. E.g., in the commentary on Hagigah, II, 1.
65. Genesis Rabbah, IX *ab init.* The allusion is to Prov. 25:2. 66. Jer. 1:11.

the words that follow: *Shoqed ʾani, and so on* [*I watch over*],[67] as we shall explain in the chapters on prophecy.[68] With regard to the same principle, in a reference to the *Chariot* there occurs the word *ḥashmal*,[69] as they have explained, and also *regel ᶜegel* [*the foot of a calf*][70] and *neḥoshet qalal* [*burnished brass*].[71] In a similar way, *Zechariah* says:[72] *And the mountains were mountains of neḥoshet* [*brass*].[73] The same applies to other words.

After these two preambles I shall give the chapter that we have promised.

CHAPTER 30

Know that there is a difference between "the first" and "the principle." Namely, a principle exists in the thing whose principle it is or simultaneously with it, even if it does not | precede it in time. Thus it is said that the heart is the principle of the living being, and the element the principle of that of which it is the element. "First" is also sometimes used in this sense. Sometimes, however, "the first" is applied solely to what is prior in time even when that which is prior in time is not the cause of what is posterior to it. Thus it may be said that the first one who lived in that house was so and so and after him so and so. It may not, however, be said [in a case like this] that so and so is the principle of so and so. The word indicative of "the first" in our language is *teḥillah* [*beginning*]: Thus: *The beginning of* [*teḥillat*] *the word of the Lord to Hosea*.[1] That indicative of "the principle" is *reshith*. For it derives from *rosh* [*head*], which in view of its position is the principle[2] of the living beings.

67. Jer. 1:12. The word *shaqed* (almond tree) is supposed by the medieval commentators to derive from the root *shaqod* (to hasten), because it blossoms more quickly than other trees.
68. Cf. II 43.
69. Ezek. 1:4. There are various medieval explanations of the word *ḥashmal*, a hapax legomenon applied to the divine chariot. According to one explanation, it signifies *ḥayot esh memalelot* (fiery talking animals). According to another, it derives from *ḥashoh* (to be silent) and *malol* (to speak). According to a third explanation, it derives from *ḥāsh* (to hasten) and *mūl* (to cut, to stop).
70. Ezek. 1:7. The word *ᶜegel* (calf) contains an allusion to the root *ᶜagol* (to be round).
71. Ezek. 1:7. According to the commentators of the *Guide*, the word *neḥoshet* (brass) alludes to the word *ḥashata* (corruption, i.e., incorruptible), and *qalal* to the word *qal* (light, swift).
72. Zech. 6:1. 73. Another reference to this passage of Zechariah is found in II 10.
1. Hos. 1:2. 2. Meaning here "the beginning."

Now the world has not been created in a temporal beginning,[3] as we have explained, for time belongs to the created things. For this reason it says: *In the beginning* [*bereshith*].[4] For the "be"[5] has the meaning of "in." The true translation of this *verse*[6] is: In the origin[7] God created what is high and what is low. This is the translation that fits in with creation in time. On the other hand the statement, which you find formulated by some of the *Sages*, that affirms that time existed before the creation of the world is very difficult. For that is the opinion of Aristotle, which I have explained to you: he holds that time cannot be conceived to have a beginning, which is incongruous. Those who made this statement were conducted to it by their finding in Scripture the terms: *one day*,[8] *a second day*.[9] He who made this statement understood these terms according to their external sense and as follows: Inasmuch as a rotating sphere and a sun did not yet exist, whereby was *the first day* measured? They express their opinion in the following text: *The first day – Rabbi Judah, son of Rabbi Simon, said: Hence* [*we learn*] *that there existed before that an order of time. Rabbi Abahu said: Hence* [*we learn*] *that the Holy One, may His name be blessed, used to create worlds and to destroy them* [*again*].[10] | This second opinion is even more incongruous than the first. Consider what was the difficulty for these two [Sages]. It was the notion that time existed prior to the existence of this sun. The solution of what seemed obscure to both of them will soon become clear to you; unless – by God! – those two meant to say that *the order of time* necessarily exists eternally a parte ante. That, however, is the belief in the eternity a parte ante of the world, and all who adhere to the Law should reject it. This passage is to my mind only the counterpart of the passage in which *Rabbi Eliezer* says, *Wherefrom were the heavens created?*[11] To sum up: you should not, in considering these points, take into account the statements made by this or that one. I have already made it known to you that the foundation of the whole Law is the view that God has brought the world into being out of nothing without there having been a temporal

3. The word *mabda'* is used, which has been translated "principle" but which cannot be so translated here.
4. Gen. 1:1. It is the first word of the Bible.
5. In the word *bereshith*, the *be* signifies a preposition meaning "in."
6. I.e., Gen. 1:1.
7. In this sentence Maimonides does not use the word *mabda'* (principle), but the word *bad'a*, which derives from the same root.
8. Gen. 1:5. 9. Gen. 1:8. 10. Genesis Rabbah, III.
11. Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, III. Cf. II 26.

beginning.[12] For time is created, being consequent upon the motion of the sphere, which is created.

Among the things you ought to know is the fact that the *Sages* have explicitly stated in a number of passages that the word *eth*[13] figuring in his words,[14] *eth hash-shamayim ve-eth ha-aretz* [*the heaven and the earth*],[15] has in that verse the meaning: with. They mean by this that He created together with the heavens all that is in heaven and together with the earth all that is in the earth. You already know that they make it clear that the heaven and the earth were created together because He says: *I call unto them, they stand up together.*[16] Accordingly everything was created simultaneously; then gradually all things became differentiated. They have compared this to what happens when an agricultural laborer sows various kinds of grain in the soil at the same moment. Some of them sprout within a day, others within two days, others again within three days, though everything was sowed at the same hour. It is according to this opinion, which is indubitably correct, that the doubt that impelled *Rabbi Judah, son of Rabbi Simon,* to say what he said, may be resolved. It was difficult for him to understand whereby *the first day and the second and the third day* were measured. There is an explicit statement on this point | made by the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* in *Bereshith Rabbah.* With reference to the *light* said in the *Torah*[17] *to have been created on the first day,* they make literally the following statement: *Those are the luminaries that have been created on the first day, but that He did not suspend until the fourth day.*[18] Thus a clear explanation as to this point has been made.

Among the things you ought to know is that *earth* is an equivocal term used in a general and a particular sense. In a general sense it is applied to all that is beneath the sphere of the moon, I mean the four elements. In a particular sense it is applied to one element, the last among them, namely, earth. A proof of this is his saying: *And the earth was unformed and void, and the darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God, and so on.*[19] Thus sometimes all the elements are called

12. *mabdaʾ*. Cf. n. 3, this chap. As to the connotations of the word "principle," see the beginning of this chapter.
13. A preposition signifying the object of a sentence. It also has the meaning "with."
14. Gen. 1:1.
15. The whole verse is: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*
16. Isa. 48:13. Cf. B.T., Ḥagigah, 12a; Genesis Rabbah, I *in fine.*
17. In Gen. 1:3.
18. The passage that follows is not to be found in Genesis Rabbah; it occurs in B.T., Ḥagigah, 12a.
19. Gen. 1:2.

earth. Afterwards he says: *And God called the dry land Earth*.[20] That also is a great secret; namely, wherever you find him saying, *God named something thus*, he does this in order to differentiate between the particular notion envisaged and the other notion equally signified by the term. For this reason I have interpreted to you the *verse*[21] as follows: In the origin God created what is high and what is low. Hence the *earth* mentioned in the first place is what is low—I mean to say the four elements—whereas the earth of which it is said, *And God called the dry land Earth*, is the element earth alone. This is now clear.

Among the things you ought to know is that the four elements are the first to be mentioned after the heaven. For, as we have said, the term *earth* mentioned in the first place applies to them. For he mentions *earth*, *water*, *spirit*,[22] and *darkness*. Now *darkness* is the elemental fire; do not think anything else. He says: *And thou didst hear His words out of the midst of the fire;*[23] and he says: *When ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness*.[24] And it also says: *All darkness is laid up for His treasures; a fire not blown [by man] shall consume him*.[25] The elemental fire was designated by this term, because it is not | luminous, but only transparent. For if the elemental fire had been luminous, we should have seen at night the whole atmosphere in flame like fire. The elements are mentioned according to their natural position; namely, first the earth, then the water that is above it, then the air that adheres to the water, then the fire that is above the air. For in view of the specification of the air as being *over the face of the waters*,[26] *darkness* that is *upon the face of the deep*[27] is indubitably above the *spirit*.[28] It was impelled to use the expression, *the spirit of God*,[29] in order to designate the air in view of the fact that the latter is supposed to be in motion, I mean to say *merahepheth* [*moving*], and that the motion of the wind is always ascribed to God. Thus: *And there went forth a wind from the Lord;*[30] *Thou didst blow with Thy wind;*[31] *And the Lord turned a west wind*.[32] This occurs frequently. In view of the fact that the term *darkness* [*hoshekh*], as employed in the first place,[33] which designates the element,[34] differs in its meaning from the term *darkness* [*hoshekh*], as employed afterwards in the signification of obscurity, it begins to explain and to differentiate, saying: *And the darkness* [*hoshekh*] *He called Night*,[35] as we have explained. Consequently this is now clear.

20. Gen. 1:10. 21. I.e., Gen. 1:1. See above in this chapter.
22. I.e., the element of air. 23. Deut. 4:36. 24. Deut. 5:20. 25. Job 20:26.
26. Cf. Gen. 1:2. 27. Ibid. 28. Ibid. Maimonides identifies the *spirit* with the air.
29. Ibid. 30. Num. 11:31. 31. Exod. 15:10. 32. Exod. 10:19.
33. In Gen. 1:2. 34. I.e., fire. 35. Gen. 1:5.

Among the things you ought to know is that the words, *And He divided between the waters, and so on*,[36] do not refer merely to a division in place in which one part is located above and one below, while both have the same nature. The correct interpretation of these words is that He made a natural division between both of them – I mean with regard to their form – making one part, that which He first calls water, into one particular thing by means of the natural form with which He invested it, and bestowing upon the other part a different form, that latter part being water proper. Hence it says: *And the gathering of the waters He called Seas*.[37] In this way it makes it clear to you that first *water* of which it is said, *over the face of the waters*,[38] is not the water that is in the *seas*, but that part of the water situated above the air was differentiated by means of a certain form, whereas another part is this water here. Thus the phrase, *And He divided between the waters which were under the firmament, and so on*,[39] is analogous to the phrase, *And God divided between the light and the darkness*,[40] in which the division is in respect of a certain form. The *firmament* itself | was produced from water; as [the Sages] say: *The middle group congealed*.[41] The words, *And God called the firmament Heaven*,[42] is intended, according to what I have explained to you, to make clear that the term is equivocal and that the *heaven* mentioned in the first place, in the words *the heaven and the earth*,[43] is not what is generally named *heaven*. It has rendered this signification even more certain by the use of the words, *In the face of the firmament of heaven*,[44] whereby it meant to make clear that the *firmament* is not the *heaven*. Because of this equivocality of the terms, the true *heaven* is sometimes likewise called *firmament*, just as the true *firmament* is called *heaven*. Thus it says: *And God set them in the firmament of the heaven*.[45] In these words there is likewise a clear indication of what has already been demonstrated, namely, of the fact that all the stars as well as the sun and the moon are situated within the sphere – as there is no vacuum in the world – and that they are not located upon the surface of a sphere, as the vulgar imagine. This appears from his saying: *in the firmament of the heaven*, and not: *upon the firmament of the heaven*. Thus it has become clear that there was a certain common matter, which it names *water*. Afterwards it was divided into three forms; a part of it turned into one thing, namely, the *seas;* another part of it turned into another thing, namely, the *firmament;* a third part turned into a thing that is above the *firmament*.

36. Gen. 1:7. 37. Gen. 1:10. 38. Gen. 1:2. 39. Gen. 1:7.
40. Gen. 1:4. 41. Genesis Rabbah, IV. 42. Gen. 1:8. 43. Gen. 1:1.
44. Gen. 1:20. 45. Gen. 1:17.

The latter is entirely beyond the earth.[46] With regard to that subject, He chose a different method of approach leading to extraordinary secrets. With regard to the fact that that which is above the *firmament* is called water in name only and that it is not the specific water known to us, a statement setting this forth has also been made by the *Sages, may their memory be blessed.* They made it in the following passage:[47] *Four entered the Paradise, and so on. Rabbi Aqiba said to them: When you come to the stones of pure marble, do not say, Water, Water, for it is written: He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before mine eyes.*[48] Reflect, if you are one of those who reflect, to what extent he has made clear and revealed the whole matter in this statement, provided that you consider it well, | understand all that has been demonstrated in the "Meteorologica,"[49] and examine everything that people have said about every point mentioned in that work.

Among the things you ought to know and have your attention aroused to is the reason why it is not said regarding the work of the second day *that it was good.* You already know what the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* have said about this according to the method of *nonliteral interpretation.*[50] The best statement of this kind they have made about this is their saying that this was so *because the work of the water had not been terminated.*[51] To my mind also the reason in question is very clear. For whenever it mentions a thing among those that exist, having been produced in time and subsisting in durable, perpetual, and permanent fashion, it says with reference to it *that it was good.* But there is something hidden, as you will see, with regard to the *firmament* and the thing above it, which is called *water.* For if the matter is considered according to its external meaning and with a recourse only to superficial speculation, it does not exist at all. For between us and the lowest heaven, there exists no body except the elements, and there is no water above the air. This judgment applies all the more if someone imagines that this *firmament* and what is above it are above the heaven. In that case the thing would be even more impossible and remote from apprehension. If, on the other hand, the matter is considered according to its inner meaning and to what was truly intended, it is most hidden. For in that case it was necessary for it to be one of the concealed secrets so that the vulgar should not know it. How then could it be proper

46. This translation appears to make better sense than the more literal rendering: All this is outside the earth.
47. B.T., Ḥagigah, 14b. 48. Ps. 101:7. 49. I.e., Aristotle's work bearing this title.
50. The Hebrew word *derash*, which is used here, is often employed in contradistinction to *peshat*, which means literal interpretation.
51. Genesis Rabbah, IV.

to say of such a matter *that it was good?* For the meaning of the words, *that it was good*, is that the thing in question is of externally visible and manifest utility for the existence and permanence of that which exists. But in a matter whose meaning is hidden and that, understood in its external meaning, does not exist in such a way as to appear useful, what utility externally visible to the people at large could there be so that the words, *that it was good*, could be said with reference to it? I cannot help adding for you the following explanation: The thing in question, though it represents a very great part of the existents, | does not constitute the purposed end for the permanence of that which exists; and therefore the words, *that it was good*, could not be said with reference to it. This could rather occur with reference to a compelling necessity that the earth be uncovered. Understand this.

Among the things you ought to know is that the *Sages* have made it clear[52] that God only made grass and trees grow from the earth after He had caused rain to fall upon them, and that its saying, *And there went up a mist from the earth, and so on*,[53] is a description of the first state of matters obtaining before the command: *Let the earth put forth grass.*[54] For this reason *Onqelos* translates: *And there had gone up a mist from the earth.*[55] This is also clear from the [scriptural] text itself because of its saying: *And no shrub of the field was yet in the earth.*[56] This is clear by now.

You who are engaged in speculation, know that, after the forces of the sphere, the first of the causes producing generation and passing-away are light and darkness – because of the heat and the cold consequent upon them. The elements intermix in consequence of the motion of the sphere, and their combinations vary because of light and darkness. The first combination that is produced by them is constituted by two exhalations, which are the first causes of all the meteorological phenomena among which rain figures. They are also the causes of the minerals and, after them, of the composition of the plants and, after those, of that of the living beings; the final composition being that of man. Darkness is the nature of the existence of the whole lower world, light supervening in it. It should be sufficient for you to know that when there is no light, the state of matters remains permanent. The [scriptural] text about the *Account of the Beginning* goes exactly in this order, leaving out nothing.

Among the things you ought to know is their saying: *All the works of the Beginning were created according to their [perfect] stature, [perfect]*

52. Genesis Rabbah, XIII *ab init.* 53. Gen. 2:6. 54. Gen. 1:11.
55. Gen. 2:6. In Aramaic. 56. Gen. 2:5.

reason, and [perfect] beauty [le-ṣibyonam].[57] He means that everything that was created, was created according to the perfection of quantity, the perfection of form, and with the most beautiful accidents. This is | expressed in the word *le-ṣibyonam [according to their beauty]*, which derives from the word *ṣebi [beauty]* as used, for instance, in the phrase: *which is the ṣebi [beauty] of all lands*.[58] Know this, too, for it is a great principle, which has been established as true and has become clear.

Among the things on which you ought to reflect carefully is the fact that it mentions the creation of *man* in the *six days of the Beginning* and says: *Male and female created He them*.[59] It then concludes its account of the creation, saying: *And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them*.[60] Then it makes a new start regarding the creation of *Eve* from *Adam*, and mentions *the tree of life* and *the tree of knowledge* and the tale of the *serpent* and all that story; and it makes out that all this happened after *Adam* had been placed in the *Garden of Eden*. Now all the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, are unanimous in thinking that all this story occurred on Friday and that nothing was changed in any respect after the *six days of the Beginning*. For this reason, none of these things should be judged incongruous; for, as we have said, up till then no permanently established nature had come about. Withal they have mentioned things that I will let you hear, having gleaned them in their various places, and I shall give you pointers to certain things, just as they, *may their memory be blessed*, have given us pointers. Know that those things that I shall mention to you from the dicta of the *Sages* are sayings that are of utmost perfection; their allegorical interpretation was clear to those to whom they were addressed, and they are unambiguous. Hence I will not go too far in interpreting them, and I will not set forth their meaning at length.[61] For I will not be *one who divulges a secret*. However, it will suffice for someone like you if I mention them in a certain order and by means of slight indications. One of these dicta is their saying[62] that *Adam and Eve* were created together, having their backs joined, and that this being was divided and one half of it, namely, *Eve*, taken and brought up to [Adam]. The expression, *one of his ribs*,[63] means according to them one of his sides. They quote as proof the expression, *a rib of the tabernacle*,[64] which [the Aramaic version] translates: *a side of the tabernacle*. In accordance with this,

57. B.T., Rosh Hashanah, 11a; B.T., Ḥullin, 60a. 58. Ezek. 20:6.
59. Gen. 1:27. 60. Gen. 2:1. 61. Or: plainly.
62. Cf. Genesis Rabbah, VIII; cf. B.T., ʿErubin, 18a. 63. Gen. 2:21.
64. This occurs, e.g., in Exod. 26:20.

they say that ["of his ribs"] means: *of his sides.*[65] Understand in what way it has been explained that they | were two in a certain respect and that they were also one; as it says: *bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.*[66] This has received additional confirmation through the fact that it says that both of them have the same name: for she is called *'ishshah* [*woman*], *because she was taken out of 'ish* [*man*].[67] It also confirms their union by saying: *And shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.*[68] How great is the ignorance of him who does not understand that all this is necessary with a view to a certain notion. This then has become clear.

Among the things you ought to know is the following explanation, which they give in the *Midrash.* They mention[69] that the *Serpent* had a rider, that it was of the size of a camel, that it was the rider who led *Eve* astray, and that the rider was *Sammael.* They apply this name to *Satan.* Thus you will find that they say in a number of passages that *Satan* wanted to tempt *Abraham our Father* not to agree to offer *Isaac* as a sacrifice, and that he also wanted to tempt *Isaac* not to obey his father. And with reference to that story, I mean to say the *binding* [of Isaac], they say likewise: *Sammael came to our Father Abraham and told him: What, old man! have you lost your senses, and so on.*[70] Thus it has become clear to you that *Sammael* is *Satan.* This name is used with a view to a certain signification, just as the name *serpent* [*naḥash*] is used with a view to a certain signification. When they speak of its coming to deceive *Eve,* they say: *Sammael was riding upon it; and the Holy One, blessed be He, was laughing at both the camel and its rider.*

Among the things you ought to know and have your attention aroused to is the fact that the *Serpent* had in no respect direct relations with *Adam* and that it did not speak to him, and that such a conversation and relation only took place between him and *Eve*; it was through the intermediation of *Eve* that *Adam* was harmed and that the *Serpent* destroyed him. Extreme enmity only comes to be realized between the *Serpent* and *Eve* and *its seed and hers.* On the other hand *her seed* is indubitably the *seed of Adam.* Even more strange is the tie between the *Serpent* and *Eve,* I mean between *its seed and hers,* a tie that is in *the head and the heel*;[71] she being victorious over it *through the head* | and it over her *through the heel.* This also is clear.

Among the amazing dicta whose external meaning is exceedingly

65. Those of Adam at the time of the creation of Eve. 66. Gen. 2:23.
67. Gen. 2:23. 68. Gen. 2:24. 69. Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, XIII.
70. Genesis Rabbah, LVI.
71. Cf. Gen. 3:15. *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

incongruous, but in which—when you obtain a true understanding of the chapters of this Treatise—you will admire the wisdom of the parables and their correspondence to what exists, is their statement: *When the Serpent came to Eve, it cast pollution into her. The pollution of* [*the sons of*] *Israel, who had been present at Mount Sinai, has come to an end.* [*As for*] *the pollution of the nations who had not been present at Mount Sinai, their pollution has not come to an end.*[72] This too you should follow up in your thought.

Among the things you ought to know is their dictum: [*The size of*] *the tree of life* [*corresponds*] *to a walk of five hundred years, and all the waters of the Beginning spring up from beneath it.*[73] They make it clear there that this measure is meant to apply to the thickness of its body and not to the dimension of its boughs. They say: *The object of this saying is not its body, but its trunk,* [*whose size corresponds*] *to a walk of five hundred years.* The interpretation of *its trunk* is: the thickness of its upright timber. They added this supplementary remark in order to complete the explanation and exposition of the meaning. This then is clear.

Among the things you ought also to know is their dictum: *As for the tree of knowledge, the Holy One, blessed be He, has never revealed that tree to man and will never reveal it.*[74] This is correct inasmuch as the nature of what exists requires it.

Among the things you ought to know is their dictum:[75] *And the Lord God took the man*[76]—[*that is,*] *raised him—and put him into the garden of Eden*[77]—[*that is,*] *He gave him rest.* Thus they do not make out that this text means that He took him away from one place and put him in another, but that He raised the rank of his existence among the existents that come into being and pass away and established him in a certain state.

Among the things you ought also to know and have your attention aroused to is the manifestation of wisdom constituted by the facts that the two children of *Adam* were called *Cain* and *Abel;* that it was *Cain* who slew *Abel in the field;*[78] that both of them perished, though the aggressor had a respite; | and that only *Seth* was vouschsafed a true existence: *For God hath appointed* [*shath*][79] *me another seed.*[80] This has already been shown to be correct.[81]

Among the things you ought to know and have your attention aroused to is the dictum: *And the man gave names, and so on.*[82] It informs us

72. B.T., Shabbath, 146a; B.T., Yebamoth, 103b.
73. Genesis Rabbah, XV; J.T., Berakhoth, XI. 74. Genesis Rabbah, XV *in fine.*
75. Genesis Rabbah, XVI. 76. Gen. 2:15. 77. Gen. 2:15. 78. Gen. 4:8.
79. The verb from which the name *Sheth* (i.e., Seth) is said to derive.
80. Gen. 4:25. 81. Cf. I 7. 82. Gen. 2:20.

that languages are conventional and not natural, as has sometimes been thought.

Among the things you ought to reflect upon are the four words that occur with reference to the relation between the heaven and God. These words are *baroʾ* [*to create*] and *ʿassoh* [*to make*] and *qanoh* [*to acquire, possess*] and *El* [*God*]. It says: *God* [*Elohim*] *created* [*baraʾ*] *the heaven and the earth.*[83] And it says: *In the day that the Lord God made* [*ʿassoth*] *earth and heaven.*[84] It says also: *Possessor* [*qoneh*] *of heaven and earth.*[85] And it says:[86] *God* [*El*] *of the World.*[87] And: *The God* [*Elohe*] *of the heaven, and the God* [*Elohe*] *of the earth.*[88] Regarding the dicta: *which Thou hast established* [*konanta*];[89] *hath spread out* [*tipphaḥ*] *the heavens;*[90] *Who stretchest out the heavens,*[91] the terms used therein are included in the verb *to make* [*ʿassoh*]. As for the word *yeṣirah* [*forming*], it does not occur in this sense; for it seems to me that *yeṣirah* is only applied to shaping and forming a configuration or to one of the other accidents, for shape and configuration are also accidents. For this reason it says: *Who formeth* [*yoṣer*] *the light*[92]—for light is an accident—and: *That formeth* [*yoṣer*] *the mountains*[93]—that is, who shapes them. Similarly: *And the Lord God formed* [*va-yiṣer*], *and so on.*[94] However, with regard to the existence proper to the whole of the world, which is constituted by the heaven and the earth, the term *baroʾ* [*create*] is used. For according to us it signifies bringing into existence out of non-existence. It also says *ʿassoh* [*to make*], which is applied to the specific forms that were given to them[95]—I mean their natures. With reference to them, it says *qanoh* [*acquire, possess*], because He, may He be exalted, has dominion over them just as a master has over his slaves. For this reason He is also called *the Lord* [*ʾadon*] *of all the earth*[96] and *the Lord* [*ha-ʾadon*].[97] However, as there is no *Lord* [*ʾadon*] without there being something *possessed* [*qinyan*][98] by Him, and this tends toward the road of the belief in the eternity of a certain matter, the terms *baroʾ* [*create*] and *ʿassoh* [*make*] are used with reference to them.[99] As for the expressions, *the God* [*Elohe*] *of the heaven* and also *God of the World* [*El ʿolam*],[100] they are used with

83. Gen. 1:1. 84. Gen. 2:4. 85. Gen. 14:19 and 22. 86. Gen. 21:33.
87. In the biblical context, "God of Eternity" is the correct translation of the Hebrew phrase *El ʿolam*. However, the word *ʿolam* also means "world," "universe"; and Maimonides evidently (see below) means to interpret the biblical phrase in this sense.
88. Gen. 24:3. 89. Ps. 8:4. 90. Isa. 48:13. 91. Ps. 104:2.
92. Isa. 45:7. 93. Amos 4:13. 94. Gen. 2:7 and 19.
95. This pronoun probably refers to the heaven and the earth.
96. Josh. 3:11 and 13. 97. Exod. 23:17; 34:23.
98. A noun deriving from the verb *qanoh* mentioned earlier in this paragraph.
99. This pronoun probably refers to the heaven and the earth.
100. Cf. n. 87, this chap.

respect to His perfection, may He be exalted, and theirs. He is *Elohim* – that is, | He who governs – and they are those governed by Him, not in the sense of domination – for that is the meaning of *qoneh* [*possessor*] – but with respect to His rank, may He be exalted, in being and in relation to theirs. For He is the deity and not they – I mean heaven. Know this.

The sum of observations given here, together with what has been stated before and what will be stated after with regard to this subject, is sufficient considering the purpose of this Treatise and considering him who studies it.

CHAPTER 31

Perhaps it has already become clear to you what is the cause of the Law's establishing the Sabbath so firmly and ordaining *death by stoning* for breaking it. The Master of the prophets has put people to death because of it. It comes third after the existence of the deity and the denial of dualism. For the prohibition of the worship of anything except Him only aims at the affirmation of the belief in His unity. You know from what I have said that opinions do not last unless they are accompanied by actions that strengthen them, make them generally known, and perpetuate them among the multitude. For this reason we are ordered by the Law to exalt this day, in order that the principle of the creation of the world in time be established and universally known in the world[1] through the fact that all people refrain from working on one and the same day. If it is asked: What is the cause of this?, the answer is: *For in six days the Lord made.*[2]

For this commandment two different causes are given, corresponding to two different effects. In the first *Decalogue*, the cause for exalting the Sabbath is stated as follows: *For in six days the Lord made, and so on.* In *Deuteronomy*,[3] on the other hand, it is said:[4] *And thou shalt remember that thou wast a slave in Egypt.*[5] *Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.* This is correct. For the effect, according to the

1. Literally: in existence. 2. Exod. 20:11.
3. Maimonides here designates the book of Deuteronomy by the term *Mishneh Torah.*
4. Deut. 5:15.
5. The biblical text has: *in the land of Egypt.* This alteration may be due to Maimonides' having had in mind, in addition to the verse referred to, Deut. 16:12 and 24:18.

first statement, is to regard | that day as noble and exalted. As it says: *Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*[6] This is the effect consequent upon the cause stated in the words: *For in six days, and so on.* However, the order given us by the Law with regard to it and the commandment ordaining us in particular to keep it are an effect consequent upon the cause that we had been *slaves in Egypt* where we did not work according to our free choice and when we wished and where we had not the power to refrain from working. Therefore we have been commanded inactivity and rest so that we should conjoin the two things: the belief in a true opinion – namely, the creation of the world in time, which, at the first go and with the slightest of speculations, shows that the deity exists – and the memory of the benefit God bestowed upon us by giving us rest *from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*[7] Accordingly the Sabbath is, as it were, of universal benefit, both with reference to a true speculative opinion and to the well-being of the state of the body.

CHAPTER 32

The opinions of people concerning prophecy are like their opinions concerning the eternity of the world or its creation in time. I mean by this that just as the people to whose mind the existence of the deity is firmly established, have, as we have set forth, three opinions concerning the eternity of the world or its creation in time, so are there also three opinions concerning prophecy. I shall not pay attention to the opinion of Epicurus, for he does not believe in the existence of a deity and all the more does he not believe in prophecy. I only aim to set forth the opinions of those who believe in the deity.

The first opinion – that of the multitude of those among the Pagans who considered prophecy as true and also believed by some of the common people professing our Law – is that God, may He be exalted, chooses whom He wishes from among men, turns him into a prophet, and sends him with a mission. According to them it makes no difference whether this individual is a man of knowledge or | ignorant, aged or young. However, they also posit as a condition his having a certain goodness and sound morality. For up to now people have not gone so far as to say that God sometimes

6. Exod. 20:11. 7. Exod. 6:7.

turns a wicked man into a prophet unless He has first, according to this opinion, turned him into a good man.

The second opinion is that of the philosophers. It affirms that prophecy is a certain perfection in the nature of man.This perfection is not achieved in any individual from among men except after a training that makes that which exists in the potentiality of the species pass into actuality, provided an obstacle due to temperament or to some external cause does not hinder this, as is the case with regard to every perfection whose existence is possible in a certain species. For the existence of that perfection in its extreme and ultimate form in every individual of that species is not possible. It must, however, exist necessarily in at least one particular individual; if, in order to be achieved, this perfection requires something that actualizes it, that something necessarily exists. According to this opinion it is not possible that an ignoramus should turn into a prophet; nor can a man not be a prophet on a certain evening and be a prophet on the following morning, as though he had made some find. Things are rather as follows: When, in the case of a superior individual who is perfect with respect to his rational and moral qualities, his imaginative faculty is in its most perfect state and when he has been prepared in the way that you will hear, he will necessarily become a prophet, inasmuch as this is a perfection that belongs to us by nature. According to this opinion it is not possible that an individual should be fit for prophecy and prepared for it and not become a prophet, except to the extent to which it is possible that an individual having a healthy temperament should be nourished with excellent food, without sound blood and similar things being generated from that food.

The third opinion is the opinion of our Law and the foundation of our doctrine. It is identical with | the philosophic opinion except in one thing. For we believe that it may happen that one who is fit for prophecy and prepared for it should not become a prophet, namely, on account of the divine will. To my mind this is like all the miracles and takes the same course as they. For it is a natural thing that everyone who according to his natural disposition is fit for prophecy and who has been trained in his education and study should become a prophet. He who is prevented from it is like him who has been prevented, like *Jeroboam*,[1] from moving his hand, or, like the *King of Aram's* army going to seek out *Elisha*,[2] from seeing. As for its being fundamental with us that the prophet must possess preparation and perfection in the moral and rational qualities, it is indubitably the opinion expressed in their dictum: *Prophecy only rests upon a wise, strong,*

1. I Kings 13:4. 2. II Kings 6:18.

and rich man.[3] We have explained this in our Commentary on the *Mishnah*[4] and in our great compilation,[5] and we have set forth that the *disciples*[6] *of the prophets* were always engaged in preparation. As for the fact that one who prepares is sometimes prevented from becoming a prophet, you may know it from the history of *Baruch, son of Neriah.* For he followed *Jeremiah,* who trained, taught, and prepared him. And he set himself the goal of becoming a prophet, but was prevented; as he says: *I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.*[7] Thereupon he was told through *Jeremiah: Thus shalt thou say unto him: Thus saith the Lord, and so on. And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.*[8] It is possible to say that this is a clear statement that prophecy is too *great a thing* for *Baruch.* Similarly it may be said, as we shall explain,[9] that in the passage, *Yea, her prophets find no vision from the Lord,*[10] this was the case because they were in *Exile.* However, we shall find many texts, some of them scriptural and some of them dicta of the *Sages,* all of which maintain this fundamental principle that God turns whom He wills, whenever He wills it, into a prophet — but only someone perfect and superior to the utmost degree. But with regard to one of the ignorant among the common people, | this is not possible according to us — I mean, that He should turn one of them into a prophet — except as it is possible that He should turn an ass or a frog into a prophet. It is our fundamental principle that there must be training and perfection, whereupon the possibility arises to which the power of the deity becomes attached. You should not be led astray by His saying: *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee.*[11] For this is the state of every prophet: he must have a natural preparedness in his original natural disposition, as shall be explained. As for his saying, *For I am young* [*naᶜar*],[12] you know that in the Hebrew language *Joseph the righteous* was called *young* [*naᶜar*][13] though he was thirty years old, and that *Joshua* was called *young* [*naᶜar*] though he was near his sixtieth year. For it says with reference to the time of *the doings* concerning *the calf: But his servant Joshua, son of Nun, a young man, departed not, and so on.*[14] Now *Moses our Master* was at that time eighty-one years old, and his whole life lasted one hundred and twenty years. *Joshua* lived after him fourteen years, and the life of *Joshua* lasted one hundred and ten years.

3. B.T., Shabbath, 92a; B.T., Nedarim, 38a.
4. Cf. Introduction to Seder Zeraᶜim.
5. Cf. *Mishneh Torah,* Yesodei ha-Torah, VII.
6. Literally: *sons.* 7. Jer. 45:3. 8. Jer. 45:4–5. 9. Cf. II 36.
10. Lam. 2:9. 11. Jer. 1:5. 12. Jer. 1:6. 13. Gen. 41:12.
14. Exod. 33:11.

Accordingly it is clear that *Joshua* was at that time at least fifty-seven years old, and was nevertheless called *young* [*naʿar*]. Again you should not be led astray by His dictum figuring in the promises: *I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy;*[15] for He interprets this and lets us know what kind of prophecy is meant, for He says: *Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.*[16] For everyone who communicates knowledge as to something secret, whether this be with the help of soothsaying and divination or with the help of a veridical dream, is likewise called a *prophet*. For this reason *prophets of Baal* and *prophets of Asherah* are called *prophets*. Do you not see that He, may He be exalted, says: *If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams?*[17] As for the *Gathering at Mount Sinai*, though through a miracle all the people saw the great fire and heard the frightening and terrifying voices, | only those who were fit for it achieved the rank of prophecy, and even those in various degrees. Do you not see that He says: *Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel.*[18] He, peace be upon him, had the highest rank, as He said: *And Moses alone shall come near unto the Lord; but they shall not come near.*[19] *Aaron* was below him; *Nadab and Abihu* below *Aaron;* the *seventy elders* below *Nadab and Abihu;* and the other people below the latter according to their degrees of perfection. A text of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, reads: *Moses is an enclosure apart, and Aaron an enclosure apart.*[20]

As we have come to speak of the *Gathering at Mount Sinai*, we shall give indications, in a separate chapter, concerning what becomes clear regarding that *Gathering* as it was, from the scriptural texts, if they are well examined, and from the dicta of the *Sages.*

CHAPTER 33

It is clear to me that at the *Gathering at Mount Sinai*, not everything that reached *Moses* also reached all *Israel.* Speech was addressed to *Moses* alone; for this reason, in the whole *Decalogue* the second person singular is used,

15. Joel 3:1. 16. Joel 3:1. 17. Deut. 13:2. 18. Exod. 24:1.
19. Exod. 24:2. 20. Mekhilta, commentary on Exod. 19:24.

and he, peace be on him, went to the foot of the mountain and communicated to the people what he had heard. The text of the *Torah* reads: *I stood between the Lord and you at that time to declare unto you the word of the Lord.*[1] It also says: *Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice.*[2] And it is explicitly said in the *Mekhilta*[3] that he repeated to them each and every *commandment* as he heard it. Again a text of the *Torah* reads: *That the people may hear when I speak with thee, and so on.*[4] This is a proof that it was he who was spoken to and that they heard the great voice, but not the articulations of speech. About hearing | this great voice, it says: *When ye heard the voice.*[5] And it also says: *Ye heard the voice of words, but ye saw no figure; only a voice.*[6] It does not say: *ye heard the words.* Thus every time when their hearing words is mentioned, it is their hearing the *voice* that is meant, *Moses* being the one who heard words and reported them to them. This is the external meaning of the text of the *Torah* and of most of the dicta of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed.* However, they also have a dictum formulated in several passages of the *Midrashim*[7] and also figuring in the *Talmud.* This is their dictum:[8] *They heard "I"*[9] *and "Thou shalt not have"*[10] *from the mouth of the Force.*[11] They mean that these words reached them just as they reached *Moses our Master* and that it was not *Moses our Master* who communicated them to them. For these two principles, I mean the existence of the deity and His being one, are knowable by human speculation alone. Now with regard to everything that can be known by demonstration, the status of the prophet and that of everyone else who knows it are equal; there is no superiority of one over the other. Thus these two principles are not known through prophecy alone. The text of the *Torah* says: *Unto thee it was shown, and so on.*[12] As for the other *commandments*, they belong to the class of generally accepted opinions and those adopted in virtue of tradition, not to the class of the intellecta.

Taking into consideration whatever else they have said about this, the texts and the dicta of the *Sages* permit considering as admissible that all *Israel* only heard at that *Gathering* one *voice* one single time—the *voice* through which *Moses* and all *Israel* apprehended *I*[13] and *Thou shalt not have*;[14] which commandments *Moses* made them hear again as spoken in his own

1. Deut. 5:5. 2. Exod. 19:19. 3. Mekhilta, commentary on Exod. 20:1.
4. Exod. 19:9. 5. Deut. 5:20. 6. Deut. 4:12. 7. In the text: *Midrashoth.*
8. B.T., Makkoth, 24a; Midrash on the Song of Songs, 1:2.
9. I.e., the First Commandment. 10. I.e., the Second Commandment.
11. The Hebrew word *geburah*, here translated "force," sometimes designates the deity.
12. Deut. 4:35. 13. I.e., the First Commandment.
14. I.e., the Second Commandment.

speech with an articulation of the letters that were heard. The *Sages* said this, quoting in support of this assertion the dictum: *God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this.*[15] And they made it clear at the beginning of *Midrash Ḥazith*[16] that they had not heard another | *voice* coming from Him, may He be exalted. Thus too a text of the *Torah: A great voice, and He added no more.*[17] It was after they had heard that first *voice* that they, as is mentioned, were terrified of the thing and felt a great fear, and that they, as is reported, said: *And ye said, Behold the Lord* [*our God*] *hath shown us, and so on. Now therefore why should we die, and so on. Go thou near and hear, and so on.*[18] Thereupon he, who was greater than anyone born of man, went forward a second time, received the rest of the *commandments* one after the other, descended to the foot of the mountain, and made them hear these commandments in the midst of that great gathering. Meanwhile they were seeing the fires and hearing the voices, I mean those voices that are said to be *voices and lightnings*,[19] like thunder and *the loud voice of the trumpet.* All that you find mentioned about hearing many *voices* – as for instance the dictum: *And all the people saw the voices, and so on*[20] – refers only to *the voice of the trumpet*, the thunderings, and the like. As for *the voice of the Lord*, I mean the created voice from which the *speech* [of God] was understood, they heard it once only, according to what the text of the *Torah* states and according to what the *Sages* make clear in the passage to which I drew your attention. This was *the voice on hearing which their soul went out of them*,[21] and through which *the first two commandments* were apprehended. Know that with regard to that *voice* too, their rank was not equal to the rank of *Moses our Master*. I shall draw your attention to this secret, and I shall let you know that this is a matter that is transmitted by tradition in the religious community[22] and that is known to its men of knowledge. Thus in all the passages in which you will find, *And the Lord spoke* [*va-yedabber*] *to Moses saying*, *Onqelos* translates: *And the Lord spoke* [*u-mallel*]. Thus: *And God spoke* [*va-yedabber*] *all* [*these*] *words*,[23] is translated: *And the Lord spoke* [*u-mallel*] *all* [*these*] *words*. On the other hand, the words of *Israel* to *Moses: But let not God speak* [*yedabber*] *with us*,[24] he translates: [*Speech*] *should not be spoken* [*yitmallel*] *with us on the part of the Lord.* Thus he, peace be on him, has made clear to you the proposition that we have set forth in detail. | You know that, as has

15. Ps. 62:12. 16. Midrash on the Song of Songs, 1:2. 17. Deut. 5:19.
18. Deut. 5:21–24. 19. Exod. 19:16. 20. Exod. 20:15.
21. Midrash on the Song of Songs, 5:6.
22. Or: nation. 23. Exod. 20:1. 24. Exod. 20:16.

been made clear,[25] *Onqelos* received these wondrous and sublime notions that he transmits *from the mouth of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua* who are the *Sages of Israel* par excellence. Know this and remember it. For it is impossible to expound the *Gathering at Mount Sinai* to a greater extent than they spoke about it, for it is one of the *mysteries of the Torah*. The true reality of that apprehension and its modality are quite hidden from us, for nothing like it happened before and will not happen after. Know this.

CHAPTER 34

Regarding the text that is in the *Torah*, namely, His saying, *Behold, I will send an angel before thee, and so on*[1]—the meaning of that text is the one explained in *Deuteronomy*,[2] namely, that God said to *Moses* at the *Gathering at Mount Sinai: I will raise them up a prophet, and so on.* A proof for this is His saying concerning this *angel: Take heed of him, and hearken unto his voice, and so on.*[3] Now there is no doubt that this injunction is addressed only to the multitude. An *angel*, however, does not manifest himself to the multitude and does not give them orders and prohibitions; consequently they could not be ordered not to disobey him. Accordingly, the meaning of this dictum is that He, may He be exalted, gave them knowledge that there would be a prophet among them to whom an *angel* would come who would speak to him and give him orders and prohibitions. Thus God forbade us to disobey that *angel* whose words the prophet would transmit to us. It makes that clear in *Deuteronomy*,[4] saying: *Unto him ye shall hearken.* And it also says: *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, and so on*[5]—this being the explanation of the dictum: *For My name is in him.*[6] | All this merely taught them this: this great gathering that you saw—I mean to say, the *Gathering at Mount Sinai*—will not be a thing subsisting

25. Literally: as they have made clear.
1. Exod. 23:20.
2. Deut. 18:18. Maimonides here designates the book of Deuteronomy by the term *Mishneh Torah.*
3. Exod. 23:21.
4. Deut. 18:15. Maimonides here designates the book of Deuteronomy by the term *Mishneh Torah.*
5. Deut. 18:19. 6. Exod. 23:21.

permanently with you, and in the future there will not be anything like it; and there will not permanently be *fire* and a *cloud*, such as those that are now *always on the tabernacle.*[7] However, an *angel* whom I shall send to your prophets will conquer the country for you, will smooth out the land before you, and will let you know what you should do. He will let you know what you should approach and what you ought to avoid. Thereby the fundamental principle was given, which I have never ceased explaining, namely, that to every prophet except *Moses our Master* prophetic revelation comes through an *angel*. Know this.

CHAPTER 35

I have already explained to all the four differences by which the prophecy of *Moses our Master* is distinguished from the prophecy of the other prophets, and I have proved it and made it manifest in the Commentary on the *Mishnah*[1] and in *Mishneh Torah*.[2] Accordingly there is no need to repeat it; moreover it does not enter into the purpose of this Treatise. I will let you know that everything I say on prophecy in the chapters of this Treatise refers only to the form of prophecy of all the prophets who were before *Moses* and who will come after him. As for the prophecy of *Moses our Master*, I shall not touch upon it in these chapters with even a single word, either in explicit fashion or in a flash. For to my mind the term *prophet* used with reference to *Moses* and to the others is amphibolous. The same applies, in my opinion, to his miracles and to the miracles of others, for his miracles | do not belong to the class of the miracles of the other prophets. The proof taken from the Law as to his prophecy being different from that of all who came before him is constituted by His saying: *And I appeared unto Abraham, and so on, but by My name, the Lord, I made Me not known to them.*[3] Thus it informs us that his[4] apprehension was not like that of the *Patriarchs*, but greater – nor, all the more, like that of others who came before. As for the difference between his prophecy and that of all those who came after, it is stated by way of communicating information in the dictum: *And there hath not arisen a prophet since in*

7. Cf. Exod. 40:38; Num. 9:15 and 16.
1. Cf. Commentary on Sanhedrin X (Pereq Ḥeleq), Introduction, seventh article of faith.
2. Yesodei ha-Torah, VII 6. 3. Exod. 6:3. 4. I.e., Moses'.

Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.[5] Thus it has been made clear that his apprehension is different from that of all those who came after him in *Israel*—which is *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,*[6] *and in whose midst is the Lord*[7]—and, all the more, from the apprehension of all those who came in other religious communities.[8]

As for the difference between his miracles in general and those of every prophet in general, it should be said that all the miracles worked by the prophets or for them were made known to a few people only. Thus, for instance, the signs of *Elijah* and *Elisha*: Do you see that the *King of Israel* inquired about them, asking *Gehazi* to communicate to him information about them? For he says: *Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done. And it came to pass, as he was telling, and so on. And Gehazi said: My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.*[9] The same holds good for the signs of all the prophets except *Moses our Master.* For that reason Scripture makes it clear, likewise by way of information with reference to him, that no prophet will ever arise who will work signs both before those who are favorably and those who are unfavorably disposed toward him, as was done by *Moses.* This is the meaning of the dictum: *And there hath not arisen a prophet since, and so on, in all the signs and wonders, and so on, in the sight of all Israel.*[10] For here it establishes a connection and a tie between the two notions, namely, that there will not arise either someone who will have an apprehension similar to his or one who will perform actions similar to his. | Thereupon it makes it clear that these signs were worked in front of *Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land*—who were unfavorably disposed to him—and also in the presence of *all Israel*—who followed him: *in the sight of all Israel.* This was a thing that had not happened to any prophet before him. Prior to that,[11] there occurred this truthful announcement that it will not happen to anyone else. You should not be led astray by what is said with regard to the light of the sun standing still for *Joshua* for certain hours—namely, *And he said in the sight of Israel*[12]—for it does not say *all Israel,* as is said with reference to *Moses.* Similarly *Elijah* on *Mount Carmel* performed his actions before a small number of men.[13] I said "certain hours," because it appears to me that the words *kayyom tamim* [*about a whole day*][14] mean: as the longest day that may happen. For *tamim* means perfect. It is as if it said that the day of *Gibeon*

5. Deut. 34:10. 6. Exod. 19:6. 7. Num. 16:3. 8. Or: nations.
9. II Kings 8:4–5. 10. Deut. 34:10–12. 11. I.e., Deut. 34:10.
12. Josh. 10:12. 13. Cf. I Kings 18:19–39. 14. Josh. 10:13.

was for them as the longest of the days of the summer that may occur there.

After the prophecy and the miracles of *Moses* have, in accordance with my injunction, been set apart in your mind—seeing that the extraordinary character of his apprehension is similar to the extraordinary character of his actions—and after you have come to believe that his is a rank that we are incapable of grasping in its true reality, you shall hear what I say in all these chapters about prophecy and about the degree of the prophets in respect of prophecy—all these degrees being after this degree [of Moses]. This was the purpose of this chapter.

CHAPTER 36

Know that the true reality and quiddity of prophecy consist in its being an overflow overflowing from God, may He be cherished and honored, through the intermediation of the Active Intellect, toward the rational faculty in the first place and thereafter toward the imaginative faculty. This is the highest degree of man and the ultimate term of perfection that | can exist for his species; and this state is the ultimate term of perfection for the imaginative faculty. This is something that cannot by any means exist in every man. And it is not something that may be attained solely through perfection in the speculative sciences and through improvement of moral habits, even if all of them have become as fine and good as can be. There still is needed in addition the highest possible degree of perfection of the imaginative faculty in respect of its original natural disposition. Now you know that the perfection of the bodily faculties, to which the imaginative faculty belongs, is consequent upon the best possible temperament, the best possible size, and the purest possible matter, of the part of the body that is the substratum for the faculty in question. It is not a thing whose lack could be made good or whose deficiency could be remedied in any way by means of a regimen. For with regard to a part of the body whose temperament was bad in the original natural disposition, the utmost that the corrective regimen can achieve is to keep it in some sort of health; it cannot restore it to its best possible condition. If, however, its defect derives from its size, position, or substance, I mean the substance of the

matter from which it is generated, there is no device that can help. You know all this; it is therefore useless to explain it at length.

You know, too, the actions of the imaginative faculty that are in its nature, such as retaining things perceived by the senses, combining these things, and imitating them. And you know that its greatest and noblest action takes place only when the senses rest and do not perform their actions. It is then that a certain overflow overflows to this faculty according to its disposition, and it is the cause of the veridical dreams. This same overflow is the cause of the prophecy. There is only a difference in degree, not in kind. You know that [the Sages] have said time and again: *A dream is the sixtieth part of prophecy.*[1] | No proportion, however, can be established between two things differing in their species. One is not allowed to say, for instance, that the perfection of a man is a certain number of times greater than the perfection of a horse. They reiterated this point in *Bereshith Rabbah*, saying: *Dream is the unripe fruit* [*nobeleth*] *of prophecy.*[2] This is an extraordinary comparison. For *unripe fruit* [*nobeleth*] is the individual *fruit* itself, but one that has fallen before it was perfect and before it had matured. Similarly the action of the imaginative faculty in the state of sleep is also its action in the state of prophecy; there is, however, a deficiency in it and it does not reach its ultimate term. Why should we teach you by means of the dicta of [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, and leave aside the texts of the *Torah? If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord do make Myself known unto him in a vision, I do speak with him in a dream.*[3] Thus He, may He be exalted, has informed us of the true reality and quiddity of prophecy and has let us know that it is a perfection that comes in a *dream* or in a *vision* [*mar'eh*]. The word *mar'eh* [*vision*] derives from the verb *ra'oh* [*to see*]. This signifies that the imaginative faculty achieves so great a perfection of action that it sees the thing as if it were outside, and that the thing whose origin is due to it appears to have come to it by the way of external sensation. In these two groups, I mean *vision* and *dream*, all the degrees of prophecy are included, as shall be explained. It is known that a matter that occupies a man greatly — he being bent upon it and desirous of it — while he is awake and while his senses function, is the one with regard to which the imaginative faculty acts while he is asleep when receiving an overflow of the intellect corresponding to its disposition.[4] It would be superfluous to quote examples of this and to expatiate on it as this is a manifest matter that everyone knows. It is similar to the

1. B.T., Berakhoth, 57b. 2. Genesis Rabbah, XVII and XLIV.
3. Num. 12:6. 4. I.e., the disposition of the imagination.

apprehension of the senses with regard to which no one whose natural disposition is healthy disagrees.

After these preliminary propositions, you should know[5] that the case to be taken into consideration is that of a human individual the substance of whose brain at the origin of his natural disposition is extremely well proportioned because of the purity of its matter and of the particular temperament of each of its [that is, the brain's] parts and because of its size and position, and is not affected by hindrances due to temperament, which derive from another part of the body. Thereupon that individual would obtain knowledge and wisdom[6] until he passes from potentiality to actuality and acquires a perfect and accomplished human intellect and pure and well-tempered[7] human moral habits. Then all his desires will be directed to acquiring the science of the secrets of what exists and knowledge of its causes. His thought will always go toward noble matters, and he will be interested only in the knowledge of the deity and in reflection on His works and on what ought to be believed with regard to that. By then, he will have detached his thought from, and abolished his desire for, bestial things—I mean the preference for the pleasures of eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, and, in general, of the sense of touch, with regard to which Aristotle gave a clear explanation in the "Ethics," saying that this sense is a disgrace to us.[8] How fine is what he said, and how true it is that it is a disgrace! For we have it in so far as we are animals like the other beasts, and nothing that belongs to the notion of humanity pertains to it. As for the other sensual pleasures—those, for instance, that derive from the sense of smell, from hearing, and from seeing—there may be found in them sometimes, though they are corporeal, pleasure for man as man, as Aristotle has explained. We have been led to speak of things that are not to the purpose, but there was need for it. For most of the thoughts of those who are outstanding among the men of knowledge are preoccupied with the pleasures of this sense,[9] are desirous of them. And then they wonder how it is that they do not become prophets, if prophecy is something natural. It is | likewise necessary that the thought of that individual should be

5. Literally: You should know that if an individual. . . . These words begin a long period that is grammatically rather incoherent.
6. Or: science and philosophy. 7. I.e., observing the golden mean.
8. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* iii.10.1118b2 ff. The passage referring to the sense of touch reads as follows in Rackham's translation: "Hence the sense to which profligacy is related is the most universal of the senses; and there appears to be good ground for the disrepute in which it is held, because it belongs to us not as human beings but as animals."
9. I.e., the sense of touch.

detached from the spurious kinds of rulership and that his desire for them should be abolished – I mean the wish to dominate or to be held great by the common people and to obtain from them honor and obedience for its own sake. He should rather regard all people according to their various states with respect to which they are indubitably either like domestic animals or like beasts of prey. If the perfect man who lives in solitude thinks of them at all, he does so only with a view to saving himself from the harm that may be caused by those among them who are harmful if he happens to associate with them, or to obtaining an advantage that may be obtained from them if he is forced to it by some of his needs. Now[10] there is no doubt that whenever – in an individual of this description – his imaginative faculty, which is as perfect as possible, acts and receives from the intellect an overflow corresponding to his[11] speculative perfection, this individual will only apprehend divine and most extraordinary matters, will see only God and His angels, and will only be aware and achieve knowledge of matters that constitute true opinions and general directives for the well-being of men in their relations with one another. It is known that with regard to these three aims set forth by us – namely, the perfection of the rational faculty through study, the perfection of the imaginative faculty through natural disposition, and the perfection of moral habit through the turning-away of thought from all bodily pleasures and the putting an end to the desire for the various kinds of ignorant and evil glorification – there are among those who are perfect very many differences in rank; and on the differences in rank with regard to these aims there depend the differences in rank that subsist between the degrees of all the prophets.

You know that every bodily faculty | sometimes grows tired, is weakened, and is troubled, and at other times is in a healthy state. Now the imaginative faculty is indubitably a bodily faculty. Accordingly you will find that the prophecy of the prophets ceases when they are sad or angry, or in a mood similar to one of these two. You know their saying that *prophecy does not descend [during a mood of] sadness or of languor;*[12] that prophetic revelation did not come to *Jacob our Father* during the time of his mourning because of the fact that his imaginative faculty was preoccupied with the loss of *Joseph*;[13] and that prophetic revelation did not come to *Moses*, peace be on him, after the disastrous incident of the *spies* and until the whole *generation of the desert* perished, in the way that revelation used to

10. This is the conclusion of the period whose beginning is indicated above, n. 5.
11. Or: the intellect's. 12. B.T., Shabbath, 30b.
13. Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, XXXVIII.

come before,[14] because—seeing the enormity of their crime—he suffered greatly because of this matter. This was so even though the imaginative faculty did not enter into his prophecy, peace be on him, as the intellect overflowed toward him without its intermediation. For, as we have mentioned several times, he did not prophesy like the other prophets by means of parables. This will be made clear later on, for it is not the purpose of this chapter. Similarly you will find that several prophets prophesied during a certain time and that afterwards prophecy was taken from them and could not be permanent because of an accident that had supervened. This is indubitably the essential and proximate cause of the fact that prophecy was taken away during the time of the *Exile*. For what *languor* or *sadness* can befall a man in any state that would be stronger than that due to his being a thrall slave in bondage to the ignorant[15] who commit great sins and in whom the privation of true reason is united to the perfection of the lusts of the beasts? *And there shall be no might in thine hand.*[16] This was with what we have been threatened. And this was what it meant by saying: *They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.*[17] And it also says: *Her king and her princes are among the nations, the Law is no more; yea, her prophets find no vision from the Lord.*[18] This is true, and the cause thereof is clear. For the instrument has ceased to function. This also will be the cause for prophecy being restored | to us in its habitual form, as has been promised *in the days of the Messiah, may he be revealed soon.*

CHAPTER 37

It is fitting that your attention be aroused to the nature of that which exists in the divine overflow coming toward us, through which we have intellectual cognition and through which there is a difference of rank between our intellects. For sometimes something comes from it to a certain individual, the measure of that something being such that it renders him perfect, but has no other effect. Sometimes, on the other hand, the measure

14. B.T., Taʿanith, 30b.
15. *jāhiliyya*, which is the word used in the text, derives from the verb *jahila* (to be ignorant), and designated Pagans and idolaters, especially those of pre-Islamic Arabia. Maimonides may have had this meaning in mind.
16. Deut. 28:32. 17. Amos 8:12. 18. Lam. 2:9.

of what comes to the individual overflows from rendering him perfect toward rendering others perfect. This is what happens to all beings: some of them achieve perfection to an extent that enables them to govern others, whereas others achieve perfection only in a measure that allows them to be governed by others, as we have explained.

After this, you should know that the case in which the intellectual overflow overflows only toward the rational faculty and does not overflow at all toward the imaginative faculty—either because of the scantiness of what overflows or because of some deficiency existing in the imaginative faculty in its natural disposition, a deficiency that makes it impossible for it to receive the overflow of the intellect—is characteristic of the class of men of science engaged in speculation. If, on the other hand, this overflow reaches both faculties—I mean both the rational and the imaginative—as we and others among the philosophers have explained, and if the imaginative faculty is in a state of ultimate perfection owing to its natural disposition, this is characteristic of the class of prophets. If again the overflow only reaches the imaginative faculty, the defect of the rational faculty deriving either from its original natural disposition or from insufficiency of training, this is characteristic of the class of those who govern cities, | while being the legislators, the soothsayers, the augurs, and the dreamers of veridical dreams. All those who do extraordinary things by means of strange devices and secret arts and withal are not men of science belong likewise to this third class. You ought to obtain knowledge of the true reality, which is that some people belonging to this third class have—even while they are awake—extraordinary imaginings, dreams, and amazed states, which are like the *vision of prophecy* so that they think about themselves that they are prophets. And they are very much pleased with what they apprehend in these imaginings and think that they acquired sciences without instruction; and they bring great confusion into speculative matters of great import, true notions being strangely mixed up in their minds with imaginary ones. All this is due to the imaginative faculty, to the weakness of the rational faculty, and to its not having obtained anything—I mean thereby that it has not passed into actuality.

It is known that in each of these three classes there are very many differences of degree and that each of the first two classes is divided into two parts, as we have explained. For the measure of the overflow that comes to each of these two is either such as only to render the individual who receives it perfect and to have no other effect, or such that from that individual's perfection there is something left over that suffices to make others

perfect. With regard to the first class – that of the men of science – the measure of the overflow that reaches the rational faculty of the individual is sometimes such that it makes him into a man who inquires and is endowed with understanding, who knows and discerns, but is not moved to teach others or to compose works, neither finding in himself a desire for this nor having the ability to do it. And sometimes the measure of the overflow is such that it moves him of necessity to compose works and to teach. The same holds good for the second class. Sometimes the prophetic revelation that comes to a prophet only renders him perfect and has no other effect. And sometimes the prophetic revelation that comes to him | compels him to address a call to the people, teach them, and let his own perfection overflow toward them.

It has already become clear to you that, were it not for this additional perfection, sciences would not be set forth in books and prophets would not call upon the people to obtain knowledge of the truth. For a man endowed with knowledge does not set anything down for himself in order to teach himself what he already knows. But the nature of that intellect is such that it always overflows and is transmitted from one who receives that overflow to another one who receives it after him until it reaches an individual beyond whom this overflow cannot go and whom it merely renders perfect, as we have set out in a parable in one of the chapters of this Treatise.[1] The nature of this matter makes it necessary for someone to whom this additional measure of overflow has come, to address a call to people, regardless of whether that call is listened to or not, and even if he as a result thereof is harmed in his body. We even find that prophets addressed a call to people until they were killed – this divine overflow moving them and by no means letting them rest and be quiet, even if they met with great misfortunes. For this reason you will find that *Jeremiah*, peace be on him, explicitly stated that because of the contempt he met with at the hand of the disobedient and unbelieving people who lived in his time, he wished to conceal his prophecy and not to address to them a call to the truth, which they rejected, but he was not able to do it. He says: *Because the word of the Lord is made a reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day. And if I say: I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name; then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I weary myself to hold it in, but cannot.*[2] This is also the meaning of the words of the other prophet: *The Lord God hath spoken, who shall not prophesy?*[3] Know this. |

1. Cf. II 11. 2. Jer. 20:8–9. 3. Amos 3:8.

CHAPTER 38

Know that in every man there is necessarily the faculty of courage. Were this not so, he would not be moved in his thought to ward off that which harms him. Among the faculties of the soul, this faculty is to my mind similar to the faculty of repulsion among the natural faculties. This faculty of courage varies in strength and weakness, as do other faculties, so that you may find among people some who will advance upon a lion, while others flee from a mouse. You will find someone who will advance against an army and fight it, and will find another who will tremble and fear if a woman shouts at him. There also must necessarily exist a temperamental preparation in the original natural disposition, which may increase through the passage of that which is potential into actuality—a passage effected in consequence of an effort made with a view to it and in accordance with a certain opinion. It may also diminish through a deficiency of exercise and in accordance with a certain opinion. The abundance or the weakness of this faculty in the young is made clear to you from their infancy.

Similarly the faculty of divination exists in all people, but varies in degree. It exists especially with regard to things with which a man is greatly concerned and about which his thought turns. Thus you will find in your soul that so and so spoke or acted in such and such a manner in such and such an episode,[1] and the thing is really so. You will find among people a man whose conjecturing and divination are very strong and habitually hit the mark, so that he hardly imagines that a thing comes to pass without its happening wholly or in part as he imagined it. The causes of this are many—they are various anterior, posterior, and present circumstances. But | in virtue of the strength of this divination, the mind goes over all these premises and draws from them conclusions in the shortest time, so that it is thought to happen in no time at all. In virtue of this faculty, certain people give warnings concerning great future events.

These two faculties must necessarily be very strong in prophets, I mean the faculty of courage and that of divination. And when the intellect overflows toward them, these two faculties become very greatly strengthened so that this may finally reach the point you know: namely, the lone individual, having only his staff, went boldly to the great king in order to save a religious community[2] from the burden of slavery, and had no fear or dread,

1. Literally: story. 2. Or: a nation.

because it was said to him: *I will be with thee.*[3] This too is a state that varies in them,[4] but it is indispensable for them. Thus it was said to *Jeremiah: Be not afraid and so on. Be not dismayed at them, and so on. For, behold, I have made thee this day a fortified city, and so on.*[5] And it was said to *Ezekiel: Be not afraid of them or of their words.*[6] Similarly you will find all of them, peace be on them, to be endowed with great courage. Also, because of the abundance of the faculty of divination in them, they give information regarding future events in the shortest time. This faculty likewise varies in them as you know.

Know that the true prophets indubitably grasp speculative matters; by means of his speculation alone, man is unable to grasp the causes from which what a prophet has come to know necessarily follows. This has a counterpart in their giving information regarding matters with respect to which man, using only common conjecture and divination, is unable to give information. For the very overflow that affects the imaginative faculty—with a result of rendering it perfect so that its act brings about its giving information about what will happen and its apprehending those future events as if they were things that had been perceived by the senses and had reached the imaginative faculty from the senses |—is also the overflow that renders perfect the act of the rational faculty, so that its act brings about its knowing things that are real in their existence, and it achieves this apprehension as if it had apprehended it by starting from speculative premises. This is the truth that is believed by whoever chooses to be equitable toward himself. For all things bear witness to one another and indicate one another. This should be even more fitting for the rational faculty. For the overflow of the Active Intellect goes in its true reality only to it [that is, to the rational faculty], causing it to pass from potentiality to actuality. It is from the rational faculty that that overflow comes to the imaginative faculty. How then can the imaginative faculty be perfected in so great a measure as to apprehend what does not come to it from the senses, without the rational faculty being affected in a similar way so as to apprehend without having apprehended by way of premises, inference, and reflection?

This is the true reality of the notion of prophecy, and these are the opinions that are peculiar to the prophetic teaching. In my exposition I have put in the proviso that it refers to true prophets only. This was in order to exclude from it the people belonging to the third class, who have no rational conceptions at all and no knowledge, but only imaginings and whims.

3. Exod. 3:12. 4. I.e., in the prophets. 5. Jer. 1:8, 17, 18. 6. Ezek. 2:6.

Perhaps they – I mean what these people apprehend – are merely opinions that they once had had and of which traces have remained impressed upon their imaginings together with everything else that subsists in their imaginative faculty. Accordingly when they void and annul many of their imaginings, the traces of these opinions remain alone and become apparent to them; whereupon they think that these are things that have unexpectedly occurred to them and have come from outside. To my mind they may be compared to a man who had with him in his house thousands of individual animals. Then all of them except one individual, which was one of those that were there, went out of that house. When the man remained alone with that individual, | he thought that it had just now entered the house and joined him, whereas that was not the case, that individual being the one among that multitude that did not go out. This is one of the points that lead astray and cause perdition. How many among those who have aspired to obtain discernment have perished through this! Hence you will find that certain groups of people establish the truth of their opinions with the help of dreams that they have seen, thinking that what they have seen in sleep is something else than the opinion that they believe in or that they had heard while awake. Therefore one ought not to pay attention to one whose rational faculty has not become perfect and who has not attained the ultimate term of speculative perfection. For only one who achieves speculative perfection is able to apprehend other objects of knowledge when there is an overflow of the divine intellect toward him. It is he who is in true reality a prophet. This is explicitly stated: *And the prophet [possesseth] a heart of wisdom.*[7] It says here that one who is a prophet in true reality has *a heart of wisdom*. This too ought to be known.

CHAPTER 39

After we have spoken of the quiddity of prophecy, have made known its true reality, and have made it clear that the prophecy of *Moses our Master* is different from that of the others, we shall say that the call to the Law followed necessarily from that apprehension alone.[1] For nothing similar to the call addressed to us by *Moses our Master* has been made

7. Ps. 90:12.
1. I.e., that of Moses.

before him by any one of those we know who lived in the time between *Adam* and him; nor was a call similar to that one made by one of our prophets after him. Correspondingly it is a fundamental principle of our Law that there will never be another Law. Hence, according to our opinion, there never has been a Law and there never will be a Law except the one that is | the Law of *Moses our Master*. The explanation of this, according to what is literally stated in the prophetic books and is found in the tradition, is as follows. Not one of the prophets—such as the *Patriarchs*, *Shem*, *Eber*, *Noah*, *Methuselah*, and *Enoch*—who came before *Moses our Master*, has ever said to a class of people: God has sent me to you and has commanded me to say to you such and such things; He has forbidden you to do such and such things and has commanded you to do such and such things. This is a thing that is not attested to by any text of the *Torah* and that does not figure in any true tradition. These men only received prophetic revelation from God according to what we have set forth.[2] He who received a great overflow, as for instance *Abraham*, assembled the people and called them by the way of teaching and instruction to adhere to the truth that he had grasped. Thus *Abraham* taught the people and explained to them by means of speculative proofs that the world has but one deity, that He has created all the things that are other than Himself, and that none of the forms[3] and no created thing in general ought to be worshipped. This is what he instructed the people in, attracting them by means of eloquent[4] speeches and by means of the benefits[5] he conferred upon them. But he never said: God has sent me to you and has given me commandments and prohibitions. Even when the commandment of circumcision was laid upon him, his sons, and those who belonged to him, he circumcised them alone and did not use the form of a prophetic call to exhort the people to do this. Do you not see the text of the *Torah* referring to him that reads: *For I have known him, and so on.*[6] Thus it is made clear that he acted only through injunction. *Isaac*, *Jacob*, *Levi*, *Kohat*, *and Amram* also addressed their call to the people in this way. You will find likewise that the *Sages* say with reference to the prophets who came before him: *the court of justice of Eber*, *the court of justice of Methuselah*, *the school of Methuselah.*[7] For

2. Cf. I 63. 3. I.e., the forms of the stars, etc. 4. Literally: beautiful.
5. The word translated as "benefits" derives from the same verbal root as the word referred to in the preceding note.
6. Gen. 18:19. The verse continues: *to the end that he may command his sons and his house after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and judgment.*
7. Genesis Rabbah, XLIII.

all of them, peace be on them, were prophets who taught the people through being instructors, teachers, | and guides, but did not say: *The Lord said to me: Speak to the sons of so and so.* Things were like that before *Moses our Master.* As for *Moses*, you know what was said to him, what he said, and what all the people said to him: *This day we have seen that God doth speak, and so on.*[8] As for the prophets from among us who came after *Moses our Master*, you know the text of all their stories and the fact that their function was that of preachers who called upon the people to obey the Law of *Moses*, threatened those who rejected it, and held out promises to those who were firm in observing it. We likewise believe that things will always be this way. As it says: *It is not in heaven, and so on;*[9] *for us and for our children for ever.*[10] And that is as it ought to be; for when a thing is as perfect as it is possible to be within its species, it is impossible that within that species there should be found another thing that does not fall short of that perfection either because of excess or deficiency. Thus in comparison with a temperament whose composition is of the greatest equibalance possible in the species in question, all other temperaments are not composed in accordance with this equibalance because of either deficiency or excess. Things are similar with regard to this Law, as is clear from its equibalance. For it says: *Just statutes and judgments;*[11] now you know that the meaning of *just* is equibalanced. For these are manners of worship in which there is no burden and excess—such as monastic life and pilgrimage and similar things—nor a deficiency necessarily leading to greed and being engrossed in the indulgence of appetites, so that in consequence the perfection of man is diminished with respect to his moral habits and to his speculation—this being the case with regard to all the other nomoi of the religious communities[12] of the past. When we shall speak in this Treatise about the reasons accounting for the commandments,[13] their equibalance and wisdom will be made clear to you in so far as this is necessary. For this reason it is said with reference to them: *The Law of the Lord is perfect.*[14] As for those who deem that its burdens are grievous, heavy, and difficult to bear—all of this is due to an error in considering them. I shall explain later on | how easy they are in true reality according to the opinion of the perfect. For this reason it says: *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, and so on.*[15] And it says: *Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, and so on.*[16] However, all this refers to the virtuous, whereas

8. Deut. 5:21. 9. Deut. 30:12. 10. Deut. 29:28. 11. Deut. 4:8.
12. Or: nations. 13. I.e., the commandments promulgated by Moses.
14. Ps. 19:8. 15. Deut. 10:12. 16. Jer. 2:31.

in the opinion of those who are unjust, violent,[17] and tyrannical, the existence of a judge who renders tyranny impossible is a most harmful and grievous thing. As for the greedy and the vile, the most grievous thing in their opinion is that which hinders their abandoning themselves to debauchery and punishes those who indulge in it. Similarly everyone who is deficient in any respect considers that a hindrance in the way of the vice that he prefers because of his moral corruption is a great burden. Accordingly the facility or difficulty of the Law should not be estimated with reference to the passions of all the wicked, vile, morally corrupt men, but should be considered with reference to the man who is perfect among the people. For it is the aim of this Law that everyone should be such a man. Only that Law is called by us divine Law, whereas the other political regimens – such as the nomoi of the Greeks and the ravings of the Sabians and of others – are due, as I have explained several times, to the action of groups of rulers who were not prophets.

CHAPTER 40

It has been explained with utmost clarity that man is political by nature and that it is his nature to live in society. He is not like the other animals for which society is not a necessity. Because of the manifold composition of this species[1] – for, as you know, it is the last one to have been composed – there are many differences between the individuals belonging to it, so that you can hardly find two individuals who are in any accord with respect to | one of the species of moral habits, except in a way similar to that in which their visible forms may be in accord with one another. The cause of this is the difference of the mixtures,[2] owing to which the various kinds of matter differ, and also the accidents consequent to the form in question. For every natural form has certain accidents proper and consequent to it, those accidents being other than those that are consequent to matter. Nothing like this great difference between the various individuals is found among the other species of animals, in which the difference between individuals belonging to the same species is small, man being in this respect an

17. *ghaḍab* (anger) in Joel's edition seems to be a misprint; the correct reading is *ghaṣb* (violence).

1. I.e., the human species. 2. Or: temperaments.

exception. For you may find among us two individuals who seem, with regard to every moral habit, to belong to two different species. Thus you may find in an individual cruelty that reaches a point at which he kills the youngest of his sons in his great anger, whereas another individual is full of pity at the killing of a bug or any other insect, his soul being too tender for this. The same holds good for most accidents.

Now as the nature of the human species requires that there be those differences among the individuals belonging to it and as in addition society is a necessity for this nature, it is by no means possible that his society should be perfected except—and this is necessarily so—through a ruler who gauges the actions of the individuals, perfecting that which is deficient and reducing that which is excessive, and who prescribes actions and moral habits that all of them must always practice in the same way, so that the natural diversity is hidden through the multiple points of conventional accord and so that the community becomes well ordered. Therefore I say that the Law, although it is not natural, enters into what is natural. It is a part of the wisdom of the deity with regard to the permanence of this species of which He has willed the existence, that He put it into its nature that individuals belonging to it should have the faculty of ruling. Among them there is the one to whom the regimen mentioned has been revealed by prophecy directly; he is the prophet or the bringer of the nomos. Among them there are also those who have the faculty to compel people to accomplish, observe, | and actualize that which has been established by those two.[3] They are a sovereign who adopts the nomos in question, and someone claiming to be a prophet who adopts the Law of the prophet—either the whole of it or a portion. His adopting a portion and abandoning another portion may be due either to this being easier for him or to his wishing out of jealousy to make people fancy that those matters came to him through a prophetic revelation and that with regard to them he does not follow somebody else. For among the people there are men who admire a certain perfection, take pleasure in it, have a passion for it, and wish that people should imagine that this perfection belongs to them, though they know that they possess no perfection. Thus you see that there are many who lay a claim to, and give out as their own, the poetry of someone else. This has also been done with regard to certain works of men of science and to particular points of many sciences. For an envious and lazy individual sometimes comes upon a thing invented by somebody else and claims that it

3. I.e., the prophet and the bringer of the nomos.

was he who invented it. This has also happened with regard to the prophetic perfection. For we find people who laid a claim to prophecy and said things with regard to which there had never been at any time a prophetic revelation coming from God; thus, for instance, *Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah.*[4] And we find other people who laid a claim to prophecy and said things that God has indubitably said – I mean things that had come through a prophetic revelation, but a prophetic revelation addressed to other people; thus, for instance, *Hananiah, son of Azzur.*[5] Accordingly these men give out as their own the prophetic revelation in question and adorn themselves with it. The knowledge and discernment of all this are very clear. I shall explain this to you in order that the matter should not be obscure to you and so that you should have a criterion by means of which you will be able to distinguish between the regimens of nomoi that have been laid down, the regimens of the divine Law, and the regimens of those who took over something from the dicta of the prophets, raised a claim to it, and give it out as their own.

Concerning the nomoi with respect to which those who have laid them down have stated clearly that these are nomoi that they have laid down by following their own thoughts, there is no need to adduce proofs for this, for with its being recognized by the adversary, no further evidence is needed. Accordingly I only want to give you knowledge concerning the regimens | with regard to which the claim is made that they are prophetic; some of them are truly prophetic – I mean divine – while others are nomoi,[6] and others again are plagiarisms.

Accordingly if you find a Law the whole end of which and the whole purpose of the chief thereof, who determined the actions required by it, are directed exclusively toward the ordering of the city[7] and of its circumstances and the abolition in it of injustice and oppression; and if in that Law attention is not at all directed toward speculative matters, no heed is given to the perfecting of the rational faculty, and no regard is accorded to opinions being correct or faulty – the whole purpose of that Law being, on the contrary, the arrangement, in whatever way this may be brought about, of the circumstances of people in their relations with one another and provision for their obtaining, in accordance with the opinion of that chief, a certain something deemed to be happiness – you must know that

4. Cf. I Kings 22:11 and 24. 5. Cf. Jer. 28:1 ff.
6. I.e., composed of man-made laws. 7. *madīna*, i.e., *polis*.

that Law is a nomos[8] and that the man who laid it down belongs, as we have mentioned, to the third class, I mean to say to those who are perfect only in their imaginative faculty.

If, on the other hand, you find a Law all of whose ordinances are due to attention being paid, as was stated before, to the soundness of the circumstances pertaining to the body and also to the soundness of belief – a Law that takes pains to inculcate correct opinions with regard to God, may He be exalted in the first place, and with regard to the angels, and that desires to make man wise, to give him understanding, and to awaken his attention, so that he should know the whole of that which exists in its true form – you must know that this guidance comes from Him, may He be exalted, and that this Law is divine.

It remains for you to know whether he who lays claim to such a guidance is a perfect man to whom a prophetic revelation of that guidance has been vouchsafed, or whether he is an individual who lays claim to these dicta, having plagiarized them. The way of putting this to a test is to consider the perfection of that individual, carefully to examine his actions, and to study his way of life. The strongest of the indications you should pay attention to is constituted by his renunciation of, and contempt for, the bodily pleasures, for this is the first of the degrees of the people of science and, all the more, of the prophets. In particular this holds good with regard to the sense | that is a disgrace to us – as Aristotle has set forth[9] – and especially in what belongs to it with regard to the foulness of copulation. For this reason God has stigmatized through it everyone who lays a claim to prophecy, so that the truth should be made clear to those who seek it and they should not go astray and fall into error. Do you not see how *Zedekiah, son of Maaseiah, and Ahab, son of Kolaiah*, claimed prophecy, were followed by the people, and give forth dicta deriving from a revelation that had come to others; and how they were plunged into the vileness of the pleasure of sexual intercourse so that they fornicated with the wives of their companions and followers so that God made them notorious, just as He disgraced others, and *the King of Babylon* burned them. As *Jeremiah* has set forth, saying: *And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the exiles of Judah that are in Babylon, saying: The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the King of Babylon roasted in the fire; because they have*

8. The expression used is *sharīʿa nāmūsiyya*; literally: nomic Law. *nāmūsiyya* derives from *nāmūs*, which is the Arabic form of the Greek word *nomos*. It signifies in the context a law promulgated by a legislator who was not a prophet.

9. Cf. above, II 36, n. 8.

wrought vile deeds in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and have spoken words in My name falsely, which I commanded them not; but I am He that knoweth and am witness, saith the Lord.[10] Understand this intention.

CHAPTER 41

I do not need to explain what a *dream* is. As for a *vision*—as in: *I do make Myself known unto him in a vision*[1]—it is that which is called a *vision of prophecy* and is likewise called the *hand of the Lord*[2] and *sight* [*maḥazeh*].[3] It is a fearful terrifying state, which comes to a prophet when he is awake, as is made clear regarding *Daniel* in his saying: *And I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.*[4] And he says: *And I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face toward the ground.*[5] | The speech of the *angel* to him and his setting him upright, all this happened *in a vision of prophecy*. In a state such as this the senses too cease to function, and the overflow in question comes to the rational faculty and overflows from it to the imaginative faculty so that the latter becomes perfect and performs its function. Prophetic revelation begins sometimes *with a vision of prophecy*. Thereupon the terror and the strong affection consequent upon the perfection of the action of the imaginative faculty become intensified and then prophetic revelation comes, as is recounted of *Abraham*. For with regard to the beginning of that prophetic revelation, it is said: *The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision.*[6] And with regard to its termination: *And a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and so on.*[7] After that: *And He said unto Abram, and so on.*[8]

Know with regard to all the prophets, concerning whom it is mentioned[9] that prophetic revelation has come to them, that some ascribe it to an *angel* while others ascribe it to God, though indubitably it was produced

10. Jer. 29:22–23.
1. Num. 12:6. 2. Cf. II Kings 3:15; Ezek. 1:3; 3:22; 37:1; 40:1.
3. Cf. Gen. 15:1; Num. 24:4 and 16. The word *sight* renders *maḥazeh; vision* is used to translate *mar'eh*.
4. Dan. 10:8. 5. Dan. 10:9.
6. Gen. 15:1. The word translated as *vision* in this verse is *maḥazeh*.
7. Gen. 15:12. 8. Gen. 15:13. 9. Or: who have mentioned.

through the agency of an *angel*. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* have expressed this by saying: *And the Lord said unto her*[10]*—through the agency of an angel.*[11] Know again that in the case of everyone about whom exists a scriptural text that an *angel* talked to him or that speech came to him from God, this did not occur in any other way than *in a dream* or *in a vision of prophecy*.

Information about the speech that comes to the prophets, according to the expression used in the prophetic books, occurs in four forms. In the first form the prophet explicitly states that the speech addressed to him came from the *angel in a dream* or *in a vision*. In the second form the prophet only mentions the speech addressed to him by the *angel*, but does not explicitly state that this happened *in a dream* or *in a vision* because he relies upon the fact that it is known that there is no prophetic revelation except in these two manners: *I do make Myself known unto him in a vision, I do speak with him in a dream.*[12] In the third form the prophet does not mention an *angel* at all, but attributes the words | of God as having been spoken by Him to him; yet he explicitly states that the speech in question came to him *in a vision* or *in a dream*. In the fourth form the prophet simply says that God talked to him or told him: Act thus! or Do thus! or Speak thus! without making an explicit statement as to an *angel* or a *dream*, because he relies upon the fact that it is known and established as a principle that no prophecy and no prophetic revelation come in any other way except *in a dream* or *in a vision* and through the agency of an *angel*.

According to the first form, there are such dicta as: *And the angel of God said unto me in the dream;*[13] *And God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night;*[14] *And God came unto Balaam;*[15] *And God said unto Balaam.*[16] According to the second form, there are such dicta as: *And God said unto Jacob: Arise, go up to Bethel;*[17] *And God said unto him: Thy name is Jacob;*[18] *And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven;*[19] *And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham a second time, and so on;*[20] *And God said unto Noah;*[21] *And God spoke unto Noah.*[22] According to the third form, there are such dicta as: *The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, and so on.*[23] According to the fourth form, there are such dicta as: *Now the Lord said unto Abram;*[24] *And the Lord said unto Jacob:*

10. Gen. 25:23. 11. Genesis Rabbah, LXIII. 12. Num. 12:6.
13. Gen. 31:11. 14. Gen. 46:2. 15. Num. 22:9. 16. Num. 22:12.
17. Gen. 35:1. 18. Gen. 35:10. 19. Gen. 22:11. 20. Gen. 22:15.
21. Gen. 6:13. 22. Gen. 8:15. 23. Gen. 15:1. Cf. n. 6, this chap.
24. Gen. 12:1.

Return unto the land of thy fathers;[25] *And the Lord said unto Joshua;*[26] *And the Lord said unto Gideon.*[27] The dicta of most of [the prophets] are similar: *The Lord said unto me;*[28] *And the word of the Lord came unto me;*[29] *And the word of the Lord came;*[30] *And, behold, the word of the Lord came to him;*[31] *The word of the Lord came expressly;*[32] *The beginning of the word of the Lord to Hosea;*[33] *The hand of the Lord was upon me.*[34] This manner of expression is very frequent.

All the dicta that are formulated according to one of these forms are prophecies, and those who utter them are prophets. However in the cases when it is said, *God came to so and so in a dream of the night*, there is no prophecy at all nor is the individual in question a prophet. | For this way of speech signifies that an intimation came to that individual from God. In addition it makes it clear to us[35] that this intimation came to pass in a dream. For just as God causes a motion of the individual in question with a view to another individual's being saved or his perishing, He also causes — by means of the vision of a dream — the creation in time of things that He wishes to be so created. For we do not doubt that *Laban the Aramean was a perfectly impious man*, and moreover an *idolater*. As for *Abimelech*, though he was a righteous man in comparison with his people, yet *Abraham our Father* said of his land and kingdom: *Surely the fear of God is not in this place.*[36] In spite of this, this is what is said of both of them — I mean *Laban* and *Abimelech: But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night*,[37] and similarly with regard to *Laban: In a dream of the night.*[38] Know this and consider the difference between the dictum [of Scripture], *God came*, and its dictum, *God spoke;* as well as that between its dictum, *In a dream of the night*, and its dictum, *In the visions of the night.* Thus it is said of *Jacob: And God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night;*[39] whereas it is said of *Laban* and *Abimelech: But God came, and so on, in a dream of the night.*[40] Accordingly the latter expression is rendered by *Onqelos: A word came from the Lord;* and he does not say with reference to these two individuals: *The Lord revealed himself.* Know that it is sometimes said: *And the Lord spoke to so and so* — although that *so and so* was not a prophet[41] and prophetic revelation had never come to him, but he was merely told

25. Gen. 31:3. 26. Josh. 3:7. 27. Judg. 7:2. 28. Isa. 8:1.
29. Ezek. 24:1. 30. II Sam. 24:11; I Kings 18:1. 31. I Kings 19:9.
32. Ezek. 1:3. 33. Hos. 1:2. 34. Ezek. 37:1; 40:1.
35. Or: it is made clear to us. 36. Gen. 20:11. 37. Gen. 20:3.
38. Gen. 31:24. 39. Gen. 46:2. 40. Gen. 20:3; 31:24.
41. Translated according to the reading of a manuscript given in Joel's critical apparatus, p. 484. The reading given in the text and corroborated by Ibn Tibbon's translation does not seem to make sense.

the things in question by a prophet. Thus the text says: *And she went to inquire of the Lord;*[42] but [the Sages] say in explanation: *To the school of Eber.*[43] And that school gave her an answer; and it is with reference to the same event that it is said: *And the Lord said unto her.*[44] And even though it has been said that the expression, *And the Lord said unto her*, means that this was done *through the agency of an angel*, this should be interpreted as signifying that *Eber* was the *angel*; for a prophet is sometimes called *angel*, as we shall make clear. Or else this explanation alludes to the *angel* who came to *Eber* with the prophecy in question; or it is intended to make explicit that whenever words are | unqualifiedly[45] ascribed to God, they came, as we have explained in the case of the other prophets, through the agency of an *angel*.

CHAPTER 42

We have explained that wherever it is mentioned that an *angel* was seen or had spoken, this has happened only *in a vision of prophecy* or *in a dream* whether this is explicitly stated or not, as has been said before. Know this and understand it thoroughly. And there is no difference between a statement in which the prophet literally affirms from the first that he saw the *angel* and a statement according to whose external sense the prophet at first thought that a human individual had appeared to him, whereas at the end it became clear to him that it was an *angel*. For inasmuch as you find in the course of the event that he who was seen and had spoken was an angel, you ought to know and to establish as true that the event was from the first *a vision of prophecy* or *a dream of prophecy*. For in *a vision of prophecy* or *a dream of prophecy*, the prophet sometimes sees God speaking to him, as we shall explain, and sometimes an angel speaking to him; sometimes he hears somebody speaking to him without seeing an individual who is speaking, and again sometimes he sees a human individual who is speaking, and again sometimes he sees a human individual who speaks to him, and afterwards it becomes clear to him that he who spoke was an *angel*. Thus in this kind of prophecy, the prophet mentions[1] that he saw a man who acted or spoke and that afterwards he knew that he was an *angel*.

42. Gen. 25:22. 43. Genesis Rabbah, LXIII. 44. Gen. 25:23.
45. Literally: absolutely.
1. Or: it is mentioned.

One of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* in fact a great man among those of them who were great, arrived at this capital principle. It was *Rabbi Ḥiyya the Great,* when speaking of the text of the *Torah: And the Lord appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre, and so on.*[2] For after he had first propounded the proposition that God manifested Himself to him,[3] he began to explain what the form of this manifestation was; and he said that at first he saw *three men* and ran; | whereupon they spoke and were spoken to. He who propounded this allegoric interpretation says of *Abraham's* dictum – *And he said: My lord, if I now have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant*[4] – that it too is a description of what he said in a *vision of prophecy* to one of them; he[5] says in fact: *He said it to the greatest among them.*[6] Understand this story too, for it is one of the secrets. I say likewise also of the story about *Jacob* in regard to its saying, *And there wrestled a man with him,*[7] that it is in conformity with the form of prophetic revelation, inasmuch as it is finally made clear that he who was there was an *angel.* This is quite similar to the story concerning *Abraham,* in which it at first informs us in a general way, *And the Lord appeared unto him, and so on,* and then begins to explain in what way this happened. It is similar with regard to *Jacob.* At first it says: *And the angels of God met him.*[8] Then it begins to explain what happened before *they met him,* and says that he sent messengers and acted and did this and that. Then *Jacob was left alone, and so on.*[9] And these[10] are *the angels of God* of whom it has been said at first: *And the angels of God met him.* All the wrestling and the conversation in question happened *in a vision of prophecy.* And likewise the whole story of *Balaam on the way*[11] and of the *she-ass* speaking; all this happened *in a vision of prophecy,* as it is finally made clear that an *angel of the Lord* spoke to him.[12] Similarly I shall say with regard to what *Joshua* said when *he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him,*[13] that this happened *in a vision of prophecy,* as it is finally made clear that the man was *captain of the host of the Lord.*[14] With regard to the dictum: *And the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal, and so on;*[15] *And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spoke these words unto all the children of Israel*[16] – the *Sages* have already literally stated that the *angel of the Lord* mentioned here was

2. Gen. 18:1. 3. To Abraham. 4. Gen. 18:3. 5. Rabbi Ḥiyya.
6. Genesis Rabbah, XLVIII. 7. Gen. 32:25. 8. Gen. 32:2. 9. Gen. 32:25.
10. The reference is to the second part of the verse that has just been quoted: *and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*
11. Cf. Num. 22:22. 12. To Balaam. 13. Josh. 5:13. 14. Josh. 5:14.
15. Judg. 2:1. 16. Judg. 2:4.

Phinehas. They said: *This was Phinehas who, when the Indwelling descends upon him, resembles an angel of the Lord.*[17] We have already explained that the term *angel* is equivocal and that a prophet may likewise be called an *angel,* as | is said in the text: *And sent an angel, and brought us forth out of Egypt.*[18] It also says: *Then spoke Haggai the Lord's angel in the Lord's message.*[19] And it says: *But they mocked the angels of God.*[20] As for what *Daniel* says: *Even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, approached close to me about the time of the evening offering*[21]—all this happened *in a vision of prophecy.* It should by no means occur to your thought that an *angel* can be seen or that the speech of an *angel* can be heard except *in a vision of prophecy* or *in a dream of prophecy,* according to what is stated as a principle: *I do make Myself known unto him in a vision, I do speak with him in a dream.*[22] You can draw inferences from what I have mentioned as to what remains of the things that I have not mentioned.

From what we have set forth before regarding the necessity of preparation for prophecy and from what we have mentioned regarding the equivocality of the term *angel,* you should know that *Hagar the Egyptian* was not a prophetess[23] and that *Manoah and his wife* were no prophets.[24] For the words that they heard or that occurred to their mind were similar to the *voices,*[25] which the *Sages* constantly mention. This is a state that accompanies an individual who is not prepared for prophecy. It is only the equivocality of the term that occasions errors as to this—this being the principle that removes most of the difficulties found in the *Torah.* Consider the dictum, *And the angel of the Lord found her*[26] *by a fountain of water, and so on,*[27] together with the use of a similar expression about *Joseph: And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field.*[28] With regard to this man, all the *Midrashim*[29] state literally that he was an *angel.*

17. Cf. Leviticus Rabbah, I. 18. Num. 20:16. 19. Hag. 1:13.
20. II Chron. 36:16. 21. Dan. 9:21. 22. Num. 12:6.
23. Cf. Gen. 16:7; 21:17. 24. Cf. Judg. 13:3 and 11.
25. *bath qōl.* Literally: *the daughter of a voice.* 26. Hagar.
27. Gen. 16:7. 28. Gen. 37:15. 29. In the text: *Midrashoth.*

CHAPTER 43

We have already explained in our compilations[1] that prophets sometimes prophesy in parables. For sometimes a prophet sees a thing under the aspect of a parable, | the meaning of that parable being sometimes interpreted to him in that very same *vision of prophecy*—just as a man may see a dream and imagine in that dream that he has already awakened and that he has related the dream to somebody else and has interpreted its meaning to him, all this taking place in a dream. This is what they call *a dream solved in a dream*.[2] Again there are dreams whose meaning becomes known after one awakens. Similarly there are parables of the prophets whose meaning is interpreted *in a vision of prophecy*, as is made clear with regard to *Zechariah*, when he says, after having first set forth the parables: *And the angel that spoke with me returned, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and he said unto me: What seest thou?, and so on*,[3] and then interpreted the parable for him; and as is made clear with regard to *Daniel* in the dictum: *Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed*.[4] Thereupon it sets forth all the parables and mentions his being anxious because he did not know their interpretation until he asked the *angel* who in that very *vision* made known to him their interpretation. And that is what he says: *I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things*.[5] It calls the whole story a *vision* [*ḥazon*] after having mentioned that [Daniel] *had a dream;* this in view of the fact that, as has been mentioned, an *angel* interpreted the dream to him in a *dream of prophecy*. This is made known in the dictum that comes afterwards: *A vision* [*ḥazon*] *appeared unto me, even unto Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first*.[6] This is manifest; for *ḥazon* derives from *ḥazoh* [*to perceive*], and *mar'eh* [*vision*] derives from *ra'oh* [*to see*], and *ḥazoh* and *ra'oh* have the same meaning. There is no difference between one's saying *in a mar'eh* [*vision*], *in a maḥazeh* [*sight*], or *in a ḥazon*.[7] And there is no third way other than the two stated expressly in the *Torah: I do make Myself known unto him in a vision, I do speak with him in a dream*.[8] However, there are degrees in regard to this, as shall be explained.[9] Among the parables of the prophets there are | many whose meaning is not

1. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, Yesodei ha-Torah, VII 3. 2. B.T., Berakhoth, 55b.
3. Zech. 4:1–2. 4. Dan. 7:1. 5. Dan. 7:16. 6. Dan. 8:1.
7. The nouns *maḥazeh* and *ḥazon* both derive from the verb *ḥazoh* (to perceive).
8. Num. 12:6. 9. Cf. II 45.

interpreted in a *vision of prophecy*, but whose purpose is known by the prophet after he awakens; thus, for instance, the parable of the *staves* that *Zechariah* took *in a vision of prophecy*.[10]

Know that just as the prophets see things whose purpose it is to constitute a parable—as for instance *Zechariah's lamps*[11] and the *horses* and the *mountains*,[12] *Ezekiel's scroll*,[13] *the wall made by a plumbline* that was seen by *Amos*,[14] the *beasts* seen by *Daniel*,[15] and *the seething pot* that was seen by *Jeremiah*,[16] and other similar parables whose purpose it is to imitate certain notions—they[17] also see things whose purpose it is to point to what is called to the attention by the term designating the thing seen because of that term's derivation or because of an equivocality of terms. In that case the action of the imaginative faculty consists in occasioning the appearance of a thing designated by an equivocal term, through one of whose meanings another one can be indicated. This too is one of the kinds of the making of parables. For instance the intention in the dictum of *Jeremiah* concerning *maqqel shaqed* [*a rod of almond tree*] is an indication based on the equivocality of the term *shaqed* [*almond*]. Scripture accordingly proceeds to say: *Ki shoqed ʾani, and so on* [*For I watch over*].[18] Thus in this case the intention of the parable did not concern the notion of rod or that of almond. Similarly *Amos* saw *klub qayiṣ* [*a basket of summer fruit*],[19] so that he should infer from it the end of the period. It accordingly says: *Baʾ haq-qeṣ* [*The end is come*].[20]

Stranger[21] than this is the intimation aroused through the use of a certain term whose letters are identical with those of another term; solely the order of the letters is changed; and between the two terms there is in no way an etymological connection[22] or a community of meaning.[23] You will find an example in the parables of *Zechariah*, when, *in a vision of prophecy*, he takes two staves in order to shepherd cattle, naming one of them *grace* [*noʿam*] and the other *ravagers* [*ḥoblim*].[24] The intention

10. Zech. 11:7 ff. 11. Zech. 4:2. 12. Zech. 6:1–7. 13. Ezek. 2:9.
14. Amos 7:7. 15. Dan. 7 and 8. 16. Jer. 1:13. 17. I.e., the prophets.
18. Jer. 1:11–12. The word *shaqed* (almond tree) has the same radical as the verb *shaqod*, which is translated in this verse as "to watch over."
19. Amos 8:2.
20. Amos 8:2. The inference can be made because of the similarity of the words *qayiṣ* (summer) and *qeṣ* (end).
21. Or: more wonderful.
22. Literally: even if there is no etymological derivation between the two terms.
23. *ishtirāk maʿnā*. One would expect "equivocality of the terms" (*ishtirāk fi'l-asmāʾ*).
24. Zech. 11:7. The translation *grace* and *ravagers* seems to conform to Maimonides' interpretation, which follows immediately. In the English Bible, the two words are translated "Graciousness" and "Binders."

of this parable was to show that in its beginnings the religious community[25] subsisted in the *grace of the Lord*, who was the one who led | and consolidated it, and that it rejoiced and took pleasure in obedience to God, while God was pleased with it and loved it; just as it says: *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day, and so on. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day, and so on.*[26] *Moses* was the one who governed and directed this community at that time, and after him some of the prophets. Afterwards the state of this community came to such a pass that obedience to God became repugnant to it and that it became repugnant to God. Accordingly He set up *ḥoblim* [*ravagers*] like *Jeroboam* and *Manasseh* as its chiefs. This is to be understood according to the etymological derivation of the word; for *ḥoblim* derives from the expression, *meḥabblim keramim* [*that spoil the vineyards*].[27] In addition the prophet inferred therefrom,[28] I mean from the term *ḥoblim*, their repugnance for the Law and the repugnance of God for them. However, this meaning can only be derived from *ḥoblim* through changing the order of the "ḥa," the "ba," and the "lam."[29] Now it says, within the context of this parable, to signify the notion of repugnance and disgust: *And My soul became impatient of them, and their soul also loathed* [*boḥalah*] *Me.*[30] Accordingly it changed the order of *ḥabol*[31] and transformed it into *baḥol.*[32] Through this method very strange things appear, which are likewise *secrets*, as in its dictum with regard to the *Chariot:*[33] *brass* and *burnished* and *foot* and *calf* and *lightning*, and in other passages. If you carefully examine each passage in your mind, they will become clear to you – after your attention has been aroused – from the gist of what has been set forth here.

25. *milla*. Or: nation. 26. Deut. 26:17–18. 27. Song of Songs 2:15.
28. Or: it may be inferred therefrom.
29. I.e., *ḥ*, *b*, and *l*. Maimonides uses the Arabic names of the letters even though the word is a Hebrew one.
30. Zech. 11:8.
31. The verb from which the form *ḥoblim* (ravagers) derives.
32. The verb from which the form *boḥalah* (loathed) derives. 33. Ezek. 1.

CHAPTER 44

Prophecy occurs only *in a vision* or *in a dream*, as we have already explained several times. Accordingly we shall not perpetually repeat this. We shall say now that when a prophet prophesies, he sometimes sees a parable, as we have explained several times. Sometimes he sees God, may He be exalted, in a *vision of prophecy*, speaking to him. Thus | *Isaiah* says: *And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*[1] Sometimes he hears an angel speaking to him and he sees him. This occurs very frequently. Thus he says: *And the angel of God said unto me, and so on;*[2] *And he said unto me: Knowest thou not what these are? And the angel that spoke with me answered, and so on;*[3] *Then I heard a holy one speaking.*[4] This occurs innumerable times. Sometimes the prophet sees a human individual who speaks to him. Thus he says in [the book of] *Ezekiel: And, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, and so on. And the man said unto me: Son of man, and so on.*[5] He says this after he has said beforehand: *The hand of the Lord was upon me.*[6] Sometimes the prophet does not see any form at all, but only hears, in a *vision of prophecy*, speech in which he is called. Thus *Daniel* says: *And I heard the voice of a man between [the banks of] Ulai.*[7] *Eliphaz* says: *There was silence, and I heard a voice saying.*[8] And *Ezekiel* also says, *And I heard Him that spoke unto me*,[9] for that which he apprehended *in the vision of prophecy* was not He who spoke to him. First he sets forth in detail the wondrous and strange story of that which he explicitly affirms to have apprehended. Thereupon he starts to explain the purpose and the form of the prophetic revelation, and says: *And I heard Him that spoke unto me.*

After we have set forth as a preface this classification, which is attested by the texts, I say that sometimes the prophet imagines the speech heard by him *in the vision of prophecy* to be extemely loud, just as a man may dream that he hears loud thunder or sees an earthquake or a hurricane. Such dreams are frequent. Sometimes he apprehends[10] the speech he hears *in the vision of prophecy* as familiar and well-known speech, so that nothing in it strikes him as strange. This may become clear to you from the story of

1. Isa. 6:8. 2. Gen. 31:11.
3. Zech. 4:5. Maimonides transposes the order of this verse.
4. Dan. 8:13. 5. Ezek. 40:3–4. 6. Ezek. 40:1. 7. Dan. 8:16.
8. Job 4:16. 9. Ezek. 2:2. 10. Literally: hears.

Samuel the prophet who, when God, may He be exalted, called to him while he was in a state | of prophetic revelation, thought time and again—three times in all—that *Eli the Priest* had summoned him.[11] Scripture then explains the cause of this, saying that he was obliged to act so and to think that it was *Eli* who called him because he did not know then that the speech of God to the prophets takes place in this form, this secret not having as yet been revealed to him. Accordingly in order to account for the cause of this, it says: *Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.*[12] It means that he did not know and that it had not been revealed to him that *the word of the Lord* comes in this way. The dictum, *did not yet know the Lord*, means that he had had no previous prophecy. For it is said of him who becomes a prophet: *I do make Myself known unto him in a vision.*[13] Thus the interpretation of the *verse* with respect to its meaning is as follows: Before that time *Samuel* had not become a prophet; neither did he know that such was the form of prophecy. Know this.

CHAPTER 45

After the preceding explanation of the true reality of prophecy according to the requirements of speculation combined with the explanation supplied by our Law, it behooves me to mention to you the degrees of prophecy according to these two sources. Now not everybody who is found in one of the degrees, which I call degrees of prophecy, is a prophet. For the first and second degree are steppingstones toward prophecy, and someone who has attained one of them is not to be considered as a prophet belonging to the class of prophets discussed in the preceding chapters. And even though he may sometimes be called a prophet, this term is applied to him in a general sort of way, because he is very close to the prophets. You should not be misled with regard to those degrees by the fact that sometimes you find in | the prophets' books that a prophetic revelation came to a prophet in the form characteristic of a certain degree and withal it is made clear with regard to the very same prophet that a prophetic revelation also came to him under a form characteristic of another degree. For with regard to the degrees I shall mention, it sometimes happens that some[1] of the prophetic

11. Cf. I Sam. 3:4–8. 12. I Sam. 3:7. 13. Num. 12:6.
1. Or: one.

revelation of one particular prophet comes to him according to a form characteristic of a certain degree, whereas another prophetic revelation, which comes to him at another time, corresponds to a degree inferior to that of the first prophetic revelation. For just as a prophet may not prophesy continuously the whole of his life, but prophesies at a certain moment and is abandoned by prophecy at many other moments, so may he also prophesy at a certain moment in a form characteristic of a high degree, and at another moment in a form characteristic of an inferior degree. Sometimes perhaps he achieves this high degree only once in his life and then is deprived of it and perhaps remains fixed in the inferior degree until the cessation of his prophesying. For there is no doubt that the prophesying of all[2] the prophets comes to an end before their death, either shortly or a long time before. This is made clear with regard to *Jeremiah* by the dictum, *At the termination of the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah*,[3] and with regard to *David* by the dictum: *Now these are the last words of David.*[4] From this one must draw an inference to all the prophets. After having made and propounded this introduction, I shall begin to set forth the degrees that have been alluded to, and shall accordingly make the following statement.

THE FIRST DEGREE

The first of the degrees of prophecy consists in the fact that an individual receives[5] a divine help that moves and activates him to a great, righteous, and important action—such as the deliverance of a community of virtuous people from a community of wicked people, or the deliverance of a virtuous and great man, or the conferring of benefits[6] on numerous people. The individual in question finds in himself something | that moves and incites him to the action, and that is called *the spirit of the Lord.* And it is said of the individual who was in such a state that *the spirit of the Lord came upon him*,[7] or that *the spirit of the Lord clothed him*,[8] or that *the spirit of the Lord rested upon him*,[9] or that *the Lord was with him*;[10] or other similar expressions are applied to him. This is the grade of all the *judges of Israel* of whom it is said in general that: *And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered*

2. Or: the rest of the prophets. 3. Ezra 1:1. 4. II Sam. 23:1.
5. More or less literally: is accompanied by. 6. Literally: making good overflow.
7. Cf. Judg. 14:6 and 19; I Sam. 10:6; 16:13.
8. Cf. Judg. 6:34; I Chron. 12:19; II Chron. 24:20.
9. Cf. Num. 11:25–26; Isa. 11:2. 10. Cf. Judg. 2:18; I Sam. 3:19; 18:12.

them.[11] This is also the grade of all the virtuous *Messiahs*[12] *of Israel.* This is made clear especially with regard to some *judges* and *kings: Then the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah.*[13] And it is said of *Samson: And the spirit of the Lord came upon him.*[14] And it is said: *And the spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard* [*those*] *tidings.*[15] Similarly it is said of *Amasai* when *the Holy Spirit* moved him to help *David: Then the spirit clothed Amasai who was chief of the captains: Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse; peace, and so on.*[16] Know that such a force did not abandon *Moses our Master* from the moment he reached a man's estate. It was because of this that he was moved to slay the *Egyptian* and to reprove the one who was in the wrong among the two men that struggled.[17] The strength of this force in him shows in the fact that when – after having been filled with fear and having fled – he came to *Midian* as a stranger full of fear and saw some wrong that was done, he could not refrain from putting an end to it and was incapable of patience with regard to it, as it says: *But Moses stood up and helped them.*[18] *David* likewise possessed[19] such a force after *being anointed with the oil of anointment.* Accordingly the text says: *And the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.*[20] And it was for this reason that he attacked the *lion*, the *bear*, and the *Philistine.* Such a *spirit of the Lord* by no means caused one of these to speak of anything; rather its object was to move the one strengthened[21] by it to a certain action: not to any | chance action, but to an action that succors a wronged one – whether it be one great man or a community – or to an action that leads to that result. And just as not everyone who has seen a veridical dream is a prophet, not everyone who has received [divine] help[22] in some chance matter – such as the acquisition of property or the achievement of an end that concerns him alone – can be said to have been accompanied by *the spirit of the Lord,* or to have *the Lord with him,* or to have done what he has done *through the Holy Spirit.* We only say this about one who has performed a good action of capital import or an action that leads to that result; as, for instance, *the success of Joseph in the house of the Egyptian,*[23] which was, as is clear, the first cause for great things that occurred afterwards.

11. Judg. 2:18. 12. Or: *anointed* 13. Judg. 11:29. 14. Judg. 14:19.
15. I Sam. 11:6. 16. I Chron. 12:19. 17. Cf. Exod. 2:11–13.
18. Exod. 2:17. 19. Literally: was accompanied by. 20. I Sam. 16:13.
21. *al-muʾayyad.* The term is habitually applied to one who has received divine inspiration and help.
22. More or less literally: who has been accompanied by help.
23. Cf. Gen. 39:2.

THE SECOND DEGREE

It consists in the fact that an individual finds that a certain thing has descended upon him and that another[24] force has come upon him and has made him speak; so that he talks in wise sayings, in words of praise, in useful admonitory dicta, or concerning governmental or divine matters—and all this while he is awake and his senses function as usual. Such an individual is said to *speak through the Holy Spirit.* It is through this kind of *Holy Spirit* that *David* composed *Psalms*, and *Solomon Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* and *Song of Songs. Daniel* and *Job* and *Chronicles* and all the other *Writings*[25] have likewise been composed through this kind of *Holy Spirit.* For this reason people call them *Writings*, meaning thereby that they are *written through the Holy Spirit.* [The Sages] have stated explicitly that *the scroll of Esther was spoken through the Holy Spirit.*[26] It is of this kind of *Holy Spirit* that *David* has said: *The spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was upon my tongue;*[27] he meant that it caused him to speak the words in question. | It was to this group that the *seventy elders* belonged, of whom it is said: *And it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, but they did so no more.*[28] *Eldad* and *Medad* and every *High Priest who was questioned through the Urim and Thummim* also belong to this group; I mean to say that as [the Sages] have mentioned: *The Indwelling rests upon him, and he speaks through the Holy Spirit.*[29] *Yaḥaziel, son of Zechariah*, likewise belongs to this group, as it is he of whom it is said in *Chronicles: The spirit of the Lord came upon him in the midst of the congregation; and he said: Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat. Thus saith the Lord unto you, and so on.*[30] So does *Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest*, belong to this group, for it is said of him: *And the spirit of God clothed Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people, and said unto them; Thus saith God.*[31] Similarly, *Azariah, son of Oded*, of whom it is said: *And the spirit of God came upon Azariah, son of Oded; and he went out to meet Asa, and so on.*[32] The same applies to all those of whom something similar is said. Know too that *Balaam*, when he was righteous, also belonged to this kind. This is the meaning that it intends to convey in the dictum:

24. I.e., as it seems, a force different from the one discussed by Maimonides when speaking of the first degree of prophecy.
25. The Hebrew Bible is divided into the *Torah* or Pentateuch, the *Prophets*, and the *Writings* or Hagiographa (*Ketubim*).
26. B.T., Megillah, 7a. 27. II Sam. 23:2. 28. Num. 11:25.
29. B.T., Yoma, 73b. 30. II Chron. 20:14–15. 31. II Chron. 24:20.
32. II Chron. 15:1–2.

And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth.[33] It is as if it said that *he spoke through the Holy Spirit.* It is for this reason that [Balaam] says of himself, *who heareth the words of God.*[34] One of the things to which we must draw attention is that *David* and *Solomon* and *Daniel* belong to this group and not to that of *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah* and *Nathan the prophet* and *Ahijah the Shilonite* and men similar to them. For they—I mean *David* and *Solomon* and *Daniel*—spoke and said what they said *through the Holy Spirit.* As for *David's* dictum, *The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me,*[35] it means that [God] gave him a promise through the instrumentality of a prophet, either through *Nathan* or somebody else; as in the case when it is said:[36] *And the Lord said unto her;*[37] and as in the case when it is said: *Wherefore the Lord said | unto Solomon: Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant*[38]—a dictum that indubitably gives expression to an announcement of future ill[39] made through the instrumentality of the prophet *Ahijah the Shilonite* or somebody else. Similarly the dictum concerning *Solomon: In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, and so on,*[40] is not pure prophecy like the one mentioned in the verse: *The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying,*[41] or like the one mentioned in the verse: *And God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night,*[42] or like the prophecies of *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah.* For even if prophetic revelation came to each of the latter *in a dream,* every one of them was informed through that same prophetic revelation that this was a prophecy and that prophetic revelation had come to him; whereas in this story about *Solomon* it says at the end: *And Solomon awoke, and, behold, it was a dream;*[43] and similarly in the second story it says: *The Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon;*[44] this makes it clear that it was a *dream.* This grade is below the one of which it is said: *I do speak with him in a dream.*[45] For those who prophesy *in a dream,* by no means call this state a *dream* after prophecy has come to them *in a dream,* but state decidedly that it was a prophetic revelation. Thus *Jacob our Father;* for after he had awakened from his *prophetic dream,* he did not say that it was a *dream,* but stated decidedly: *Surely the Lord is in this place, and so on.*[46] And he also said: *God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan;*[47] he thus decided that that was a prophetic revelation. Whereas with regard to

33. Num. 23:5. 34. Num. 24:4. 35. II Sam. 23:3. 36. Gen. 25:23.
37. To Rebekah. 38. I Kings 11:11.
39. The literal meaning of the word used is "a promise of ill." 40. I Kings 3:5.
41. Gen. 15:1. 42. Gen. 46:2. 43. I Kings 3:15. 44. I Kings 9:2.
45. Num. 12:6. 46. Gen. 28:16. 47. Gen. 48:3.

Solomon, it says: *And Solomon awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.* Similarly you will find that *Daniel* applies to them the expression "dreams," even though he saw an angel in those dreams and heard words spoken in them. He calls them dreams even after he has received knowledge through them. Thus it says: *Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a vision of the night.*[48] It also says: *Then he wrote the dream, and so on;*[49] *I saw in my vision by night, and so on;*[50] *And the visions of | my head affrighted me.*[51] And he says: *And I was appalled at the vision, but understood it not.*[52] There is no doubt that this grade is below the grade of those of whom it is said: *I do speak with him in a dream.*[53] For this reason the nation[54] has reached a consensus to put the *book of Daniel* among the *Writings*,[55] and not among the *Prophets*. For this reason I called your attention to the fact that in the kind of prophecy that came to *Daniel* and *Solomon*, they did not discover in their souls – even though they saw *an angel in a dream* – that this was a pure prophecy, but rather that this was a *dream* communicating the true reality of certain matters. This is characteristic of the group of people who speak *through the Holy Spirit*. This is the second degree. Similarly, when arranging the *Holy Scriptures*, they[56] made no difference between *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* and *Daniel* and *Psalms*, on one hand, and the *Scroll of Ruth* or the *Scroll of Esther* on the other; *all of them have been written through the Holy Spirit.* Also all these are called, in a general way, prophets.

THE THIRD DEGREE

This is the first of the degrees of those who say, *The word of the Lord came to me*, or who use expressions having a similar sense. This class tends to be represented through a prophet's seeing[57] a parable *in a dream* according to all the conditions set forth before with regard to the true reality of prophecy. And it is in the *dream of prophecy* itself that the meaning of the parable – what was intended thereby – is made manifest to the prophet, as for instance in most of the parables of *Zechariah*.[58]

THE FOURTH DEGREE

consists in the prophet's hearing articulate and clear speech *in the dream*

48. Dan. 2:19. 49. Dan. 7:1. 50. Dan. 7:2. 51. Dan. 7:15.
52. Dan. 8:27. 53. Num. 12:6. 54. Or: religious community.
55. Cf. n. 25, this chap. 56. The ones who did this.
57. Literally: What from the expressions tended toward this meaning is that the prophet sees. . . .
58. Cf. II 43.

of prophecy, but without seeing the speaker; as has happened to *Samuel* in the first prophetic revelation that came to him, as we have explained with regard to him.[59] |

THE FIFTH DEGREE

This consists in the prophet's being addressed by a *man in a dream*, as it says in one of *Ezekiel's* prophecies: *And the man said unto me: Son of man, and so on.*[60]

THE SIXTH DEGREE

consists in the prophet's being addressed by an *angel in a dream*. This is the state of the majority of the *prophets*. Thus it says: *And the angel of God said unto me in the dream, and so on.*[61]

THE SEVENTH DEGREE

consists in the fact that in the *dream of prophecy* the prophet sees, as it were, that He, may He be exalted, addresses him. Thus *Isaiah* says: *I saw the Lord, and so on.*[62] *And He said,*[63] *Whom shall I send, and so on.*[64] Thus *Micaiah, son of Imla*, says: *I saw the Lord, and so on.*[65]

THE EIGHTH DEGREE

consists in the fact that a prophetic revelation comes to the prophet *in a vision of prophecy* and that he sees parables, as *Abraham in the vision between the pieces*;[66] for these parables came *in a vision* during the day, as has been set forth.[67]

THE NINTH DEGREE

consists in the prophet's hearing speech *in a vision*, as is said with regard to *Abraham: And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir.*[68] |

59. Cf. II 44. 60. Ezek. 40:4. 61. Gen. 31:11.
62. Isa. 6:1. The quotation is not quite accurate. The verb has a different tense in the Bible than the one used in Maimonides' quotation.
63. The verbal form used by Maimonides is not the one occurring in the biblical text.
64. Isa. 6:8. 65. I Kings 22:19; II Chron. 18:18. 66. Cf. Gen. 15:9–10.
67. Cf. II 41. 68. Gen. 15:4.

THE TENTH DEGREE

consists in the prophet's seeing a *man* who addresses him *in a vision of prophecy*, as *Abraham* again by the *terebinths of Mamre* and as *Joshua* in *Jericho*.[69]

THE ELEVENTH DEGREE

consists in the prophet's seeing an *angel* who addresses him *in a vision*, as *Abraham at the time of the binding*.[70] In my opinion this is the highest of the degrees of the prophets whose states are attested by the prophetic books, after the perfection of the rational faculties of the individual, considered as necessary[71] by speculation, has been established, and provided one exempts *Moses our Master*. With regard to the question whether it is possible that a prophet would also see *in a vision of prophecy* that God, as it were, addressed him – this, in my opinion, is improbable, for the power of the act of the imagination does not reach this point. And we have not found this state in the other prophets.[72] For this reason it is clearly said in the *Torah: I do make Myself known unto him* [*elav ethvada*] *in a vision, I do speak with him in a dream*.[73] Thus it assigns *speech* to *dreams* only, assigning to *visions* the union and overflow of the intellect, this being signified by the words: *elav ethvada*. For ["ethvada"] is a reflexive form[74] of the verb *yadoᶜa* [*to know*]. Thus it is not explicitly stated that speech coming from God can be heard in a *vision*.

Inasmuch as I found scriptural texts attesting that prophets heard speech – it having been made clear that this was *in a vision* – I said by way of conjecture that it is possible that the speech that is heard *in a dream* and the like of which may not occur *in a vision*, is that regarding which it is imagined by the prophet that God addresses him; all this is said in following the external sense of the verse. One could also say that every *vision* in which you find the prophet hearing speech was in its beginning | a *vision*, but ended in a state of submersion[75] and became a *dream*, as we have explained with regard to the dictum: *And a deep sleep fell upon Abram*.[76] [The Sages] have said: *This is the deep sleep of prophecy*.[77] All

69. Cf. II 42. 70. Of Isaac with a view to sacrificing him; cf. Gen. 22.
71. Rather than "obtained," which is Munk's interpretation.
72. I.e., with the exception of Moses. However, the text can also be translated: in any of the prophets.
73. Num. 12:6.
74. In the text: *iftiᶜāl*, which is a reflexive form of Arabic verbs. 75. In sleep.
76. Gen. 15:12. 77. Genesis Rabbah, XVII and XLIV.

speech that is heard, whatever the way may be in which it is heard, is heard only *in a dream;* as the text has it: *I do speak with him in a dream.*[78] On the other hand, in a *vision of prophecy* only parables or intellectual unifications[79] are apprehended that give actual cognition of scientific matters similar to those, knowledge of which is obtained through speculation, as we have explained. This is the meaning of its dictum: *I do make Myself known unto him in a vision.*[80] Consequently, according to this last allegoric interpretation, there are eight degrees of prophecy; the highest and most perfect among them being the one in which the prophet prophesies *in a vision*—taking this in a general way—even though, as has been mentioned, he is merely addressed by a *man.* Perhaps you will proffer an objection to me, saying: You have counted among the degrees of prophecy the degree in which the prophet hears speech coming from God who addresses him, as in the cases of *Isaiah* and *Micaiah.* How can this be in view of the fact that our principle states that all prophets hear speech only through the intermediary of an *angel,* the sole exception being *Moses our Master,* of whom it is said: *With him do I speak mouth to mouth.*[81] Know then that this is in fact so, and that in these cases the intermediary is the imaginative faculty. For a prophet can hear only *in a dream of prophecy* that God has spoken to him. *Moses our Master,* on the other hand, heard Him *from above the ark-cover, from between the two cherubim,*[82] without action on the part of the imaginative faculty. We have already set forth in *Mishneh Torah* the peculiarities of this prophecy and have interpreted the meaning of the passages: *Mouth to mouth;*[83] *As a man speaketh unto his friend;*[84] and of other passages.[85] Understand this from there; and there will be no need to repeat what has already been said. |

CHAPTER 46

From a single individual an inference can be drawn concerning all individuals of the species, and it can be known that this particular form is that of all the individuals of the species. What I want to say by this is that from

78. Num. 12:6.
79. I.e., the union of the Active Intellect with the intellect of the prophet.
80. Num. 12:6. 81. Num. 12:8. 82. Exod. 25:22. 83. Num. 12:8.
84. Exod. 33:11. 85. Cf. *Mishneh Torah,* Yesodei ha-Torah, VII 6.

a single form of the communications of the prophets, an inference can be drawn to all the communications belonging to that species.

After this introduction you should know that just as a man sees while sleeping that he has made a journey to a certain country, has married there, has stayed there for a certain time, that a son was born to him there, that he called him by a certain name, and that this son's circumstances and state were such and such; so in the case of prophetic parables seen or enacted *in a vision of prophecy*, when the parable requires a certain action, when things are done by the prophet, when intervals of time are mentioned within the parable between the various actions and the transportation from one place to another, this takes place only *in a vision of prophecy*, they are not real actions, actions that exist for the external senses. Some of them are set forth in the books of prophecy without qualification.[1] For since it is known that all these things occur *in a vision of prophecy*, Scripture in the recounting of all details of the parable may dispense with reiterating that they happened *in a vision of prophecy*. Similarly a prophet may say, *And the Lord said unto me*,[2] without having the need to state explicitly that this happened *in a dream*. Therefore the multitude think that these actions, transportations, questions, and answers, occurred all of them in a state in which they could have been perceived by the senses, not in *a vision of prophecy*. As to this I shall cite you an example | about which no one can have fanciful notions, and I shall add to it some other examples belonging to the same species. And from these examples you will be able to draw an inference regarding those that I shall not mention.

An example that is clear and about which no one can have fanciful notions is the dictum of *Ezekiel: I sat in my house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, and so on. And a spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem.*[3] Similarly when he says, *Then I arose, and went forth into the plain*,[4] this also only happened *in the visions of God*. Just as when it is said of *Abraham: And He brought him forth abroad*,[5] this occurred *in a sight*.[6] In a similar way when he says, *And set me down in the midst of the valley*,[7] this only happened *in the visions of God*. With regard to the *vision* in which *Ezekiel* was brought

1. Literally: absolutely. Maimonides means to say that sometimes Scripture does not expressly state with regard to various details that they formed part of a vision.
2. Cf. Jer. 1:7, 9, 12, 14; Ezek. 44:2; Zech. 11:13. 3. Ezek. 8:1 and 3.
4. Ezek. 3:23. 5. Gen. 15:5.
6. Cf. Gen. 15:1. The word translated here as *sight* is *maḥazeh*. Unless otherwise noted, wherever *vision* occurs in this chapter, *mar'eh* is the Hebrew term used.
7. Ezek. 37:1.

into *Jerusalem*, he makes a dictum of which the text is as follows: *And when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said He unto me: Son of man, dig now in the wall; and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door, and so on.*[8] And just as he saw *in the visions of God* that he was ordered to dig in the wall in order to enter and see what was being done there and that he dug—*in the visions of God*, as has been mentioned—and entered through the hole and saw that which he saw—all that *in a vision of prophecy*. So was his saying to him: *Thou also . . . take thee a tile, and so on. Moreover lie thou upon thy left side, and so on.*[9] *Take thou also unto thee wheat and barley, and so on;* as well as his saying to him: *And cause it*[10] *to pass upon thy head and upon thy beard*[11]—seen, all of it, *in a vision of prophecy* in which he saw that he carried out the actions he was ordered to carry out. God is too exalted than that He should turn His prophets into a laughing-stock and a mockery for fools by ordering them to carry out crazy actions. And this in addition to ordering them to commit acts of disobedience; for [Ezekiel] was a *Priest*, and *every side of beard or of hair he cut made him guilty of transgressing two prohibitions.* But all this happened merely *in a vision of prophecy*. In the same way when He says, *Like as My servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot,*[12] | this only happened *in the visions of God.* Only those weak in syllogistic reasoning fancy with regard to all this that the prophet tells that he was ordered to do certain things and hence did them. For instance he tells that he was ordered, while he was in *Babylon*, to dig in the wall that is on *the mountain of the temple*, and thereupon he recounts that he actually dug in it; for he says: *And when I had digged in the wall.*[13] However, he had already made it clear that this was *in the visions of God.* Similarly it is said of *Abraham: The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a sight, saying.*[14] And it is said in this same *vision of prophecy: And He brought him forth abroad, and said: Look now toward heaven, and count the stars.*[15] It is therefore clear that it was in a *vision of prophecy* that he saw that he was brought out from the place he was in so that he should see the heavens and that afterwards it was said to him: *And count the stars;* and this is recounted in the way you see. I shall say the same thing regarding the order given to *Jeremiah* to hide the *girdle* in the *Euphrates.*[16] Thereupon he hid it and then, after a long time, going to fetch it, found that it had rotted away and was spoilt. All those happenings are parables *in a vision of prophecy*. For *Jeremiah* did not go out of the

8. Ezek. 8:7–8. 9. Ezek. 4:1, 4, 9. 10. I.e., a barber's razor. 11. Ezek. 5:1.
12. Isa. 20:3. 13. Ezek. 8:8. 14. Gen. 15:1. 15. Gen. 15:5.
16. Cf. Jer. 13:4–7.

Land of Israel to *Babylon* and did not see the *Euphrates*. The position is similar with regard to the words addressed to *Hosea: Take unto thee a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry*.[17] All this story concerning the birth of the children and their having been named so and so happened in its entirety *in a vision of prophecy*. For after it has been stated expressly that these were parables, there remains no room for obscurity as to any of these things having a real existence except according to what has been said of us: *And the vision*[18] *of all is become unto you as the words of a book, and so on*.[19] It likewise seems to me that the story concerning *Gideon* with regard to the *fleece* and other things[20] only occurred in the *vision*. I will not call it unqualifiedly a *vision of prophecy*. For *Gideon* did not reach the rank of the prophets; so how could he have reached the rank of one who works miracles? His highest achievement is that of having been included *among the judges of Israel* | and [the Sages] have even numbered him,[21] as we have made clear,[22] as being *among the inconsequential people of the world*. All this only happened *in a dream* similar to the *dream of Laban and of Abimelech* that we have mentioned.[23] Similarly what *Zechariah* says: *So I fed the flock of slaughter, verily the poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves*,[24] and the whole tale till its ending about the wages asked for gently, his taking the wages, the number of the drachmas, and their being cast in the *house of the founder*,[25] was all of it seen in a *vision of prophecy;* he was ordered to do it and so he did it either in a *vision of prophecy* or *in a dream of prophecy*. This is a thing that can only be doubted or not known by him who confuses the possible things with the impossible ones.

From what I have mentioned you may draw an inference to what I have not mentioned, for all these things pertain to the same species and to the same method. All have occurred in a *vision of prophecy*. And everything that is said concerning such a *vision* — for instance that he[26] acted in it or heard or went out or went in or spoke or was spoken to or stood or sat down or went up or went down or made a journey or asked a question or was asked — all of it happens in a *vision of prophecy*. And even if such actions should have had a long duration and should have been attached to certain

17. Hos. 1:2.
18. The noun *ḥazuth*, used here, is derived from the same verb as *ḥazon* and *maḥazeh*.
19. Isa. 29:11. The verse continues: *that is sealed*.
20. Cf. Judg. 6:21 and 37.
21. B.T., Rosh Hashanah, 25a–b.
22. Cf. II 41 and 45 (section on the first degree of prophecy). Maimonides does not refer in those chapters to the dictum in disparagement of Gideon that is quoted here.
23. Cf. II 41. 24. Zech. 11:7. 25. Cf. Zech. 11:12–13.
26. I.e., the individual who had the vision.

times, to individuals that are indicated, and to places, you should – as soon as it has become clear to you that the action in question is a parable – have certain knowledge that it occurred *in a vision of prophecy*.

CHAPTER 47

Undoubtedly it has become clear and manifest that the greater part of the prophecies of the prophets proceeds by means of parables; for that is the action of the instrument for this,[1] I mean the imagination. Something should likewise be known about figurative uses | and hyperboles, for they sometimes occur in the text of the prophetic books. And if the words are understood according to their precise meaning and it is not known that they constitute a hyperbole or an exaggeration, or if they are understood according to their first conventional meaning and it is not known that they are used figuratively, incongruities arise. [The Sages] have given an explanation by saying, *The Torah speaks in exaggerated language*[2] – that is, hyperbole – and have used as a proof the dictum: *Cities great and walled up to heaven*.[3] And this is correct. The dictum, *For a bird of heaven shall carry the voice*,[4] belongs to the class of hyperbole. In a similar way it is said: *Whose height was like the height of the cedars, and so on*.[5] This kind of language occurs frequently in the dicta of all the prophets – I mean things said in a hyperbolical and exaggerated, not a precise and exact, way.

However, what the *Torah* literally states about *Og* does not belong to this group: *Behold, his bedstead was a bedstead* [*ʿeres*] *of iron, and so on*.[6] For *ʿeres* is a bed: *Also our bed* [*ʿarsenu*] *is verdant*.[7] Now a man's bed is not exactly his size, for it is not a garment, which one puts on. The bed is rather always bigger than the individual who sleeps on it. And the usual and well-known thing is for it to be longer than the individual by a third of his length. If the length of the bed in question came to nine cubits, the length of him who slept on it must, according to the usual proportion of beds, have come to six cubits or a little more. And its dictum, *after the cubit of a man*,[8] means according to the cubit of an individual from among ourselves –

1. I.e., for prophecy. 2. B.T., Ḥullin, 90a; B.T., Tamid, 2a.
3. Deut. 1:28. 4. Eccles. 10:20. 5. Amos 2:9.
6. Deut. 3:11. 7. Song of Songs 1:16. 8. Deut. 3:11.

I mean to say from among the rest of men—and not according to the cubit of *Og*. For all individuals have mostly proportionate members; accordingly it says that the length of *Og* was twice that of other men or a little more. This is doubtless anomalous for the individuals of the species, but is by no means impossible. | As for the precise statements made by the texts of the *Torah* regarding the length of life of certain individuals, I say that only that individual who is mentioned lived so long a life, whereas the other men lived lives that had the natural and usual duration. The anomaly in the individual in question may be due either to numerous causes attaching to his nutrition and his regimen or is due to a miracle and follows the laws thereof. It is not possible to say of this anything else.

Similarly one ought to examine carefully the things said in a figurative way. Some of them are clear and manifest and do not seem obscure to anybody. Thus, for instance, its dictum: *The mountains and hills shall break forth before you singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*[9] This is clearly figurative language. And similarly its dictum: *Yea, the cypresses rejoice at thee, and so on.*[10] *Jonathan ben Uziel* translated this as follows: *Also the rulers rejoiced in thee, those rich in property.* Thus he set the passage down as a parable, like the passage: *Curd of kine and milk of sheep, and so on.*[11] This figurative use of language is exceedingly frequent in the books of prophecy. With regard to some of them the multitude are aware that the expressions are figurative, whereas with regard to others they think that they are not figurative. For no one doubts with respect to its dictum, *The Lord shall open unto thee His* [*good*] *treasure, and so on,*[12] that this is figurative and that God has no *treasure* in which there is *rain*. Similarly when it says, *And opened the doors of heaven, and caused manna to rain upon them,*[13] no one thinks that there are in heaven a gate and *doors*. For this is said as a simile, which is a species of figurative language. It is likewise in this way that one ought to understand its dicta: *The heavens were opened;*[14] *And if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written;*[15] *I will blot him out of My book;*[16] *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living.*[17] All these expressions are used as similes; | and they do not mean that there exists a *book* belonging to Him, may He be exalted, in which He writes and from which He blots out, as is thought by the multitude because of their not being aware of the use of figurative language in the passages in question.

9. Isa. 55:12. 10. Isa. 14:8. 11. Deut. 32:14.
12. Deut. 28:12. The verse continues: *the heaven to give the rain of thy land in its season.*
13. Ps. 78:23–24. 14. Ezek. 1:1. 15. Exod. 32:32. 16. Exod. 32:33.
17. Ps. 69:29.

All these expressions belong to the same class. Take, therefore, what I have not mentioned in the manner that I have mentioned in this chapter, and distinguish and differentiate between the various matters by means of your intellect. Then you will know clearly[18] what has been said by way of a parable, what has been said figuratively, what has been said by way of a hyperbole, and what has been said exactly according to the first conventional meaning. Then all the prophecies will become clear and manifest to you. And then only intelligible beliefs will remain with you, beliefs that are well ordered[19] and that are pleasing to God. For only truth pleases Him, may He be exalted, and only that which is false angers Him. Your opinions and thoughts should not become confused so that you believe in incorrect opinions that are very remote from the truth and you regard them as Law. For the Laws are absolute truth if they are understood in the way they ought to be. Accordingly it says: *Thy testimonies are righteous for ever, and so on;*[20] and: *I the Lord speak righteousness.*[21] Through these considerations you will be delivered from imagining beings that God has not brought into being and from evil thoughts, some of which may perhaps lead to infidelity[22] and to a belief that there may be a defect in God—such as modes of corporeality, attributes, and passions—as we have set forth.[23] Or again you may think[24] that these dicta of the prophets are false. The whole fault that incites to this is neglect of that to which we have drawn attention. These too are notions pertaining to the *mysteries of the Torah.* And though we have only spoken summarily about them, it is easy, after what has been set forth before, to know the details of these matters. |

CHAPTER 48

It is very clear that everything that is produced in time must necessarily have a proximate cause, which has produced it. In its turn that cause has a cause and so forth till finally one comes to the First Cause of all things, I mean God's will and free choice. For this reason all those intermediate causes are sometimes omitted in the dicta of the prophets, and an individual

18. Literally: It will be clear to you. 19. Literally: that go according to an order.
20. Ps. 119:144. 21. Isa. 45:19.
22. *kufr*; i.e., disbelief in fundamental religious dogma. 23. Cf. I 44 *et seq.*
24. I.e., if you are not guided by the considerations set forth above.

act produced in time is ascribed to God, it being said that He, may He be exalted, has done it. All this is known. We and other men from among those who study true reality have spoken about it, and this is the opinion of all the people adhering to our Law.

After this introduction, listen to what I shall explain in this chapter and consider it with particular attention, with an attention exceeding the attention with which you consider the other chapters of this Treatise. This is the matter that I shall make clear to you. Know that all proximate causes through which is produced in time that which is produced in time, regardless of whether these causes are essential and natural, or voluntary, or accidental and fortuitous – I mean by the voluntary cause of that particular thing produced in time, the free choice of a man – and even if the cause consists in the volition of an animal other than man: that all these causes are ascribed in the books of the prophets to God, may He be exalted. And according to their manner of expressing themselves, it is said of such and such an act that God did it or commanded it or said it. For all these things the *expressions to say*, *to speak*, *to command*, *to call*, | and *to send* are used. This is the notion to which I wished to draw attention in this chapter. For inasmuch as the deity is, as has been established, He who arouses a particular volition in the irrational animal[1] and who has necessitated this particular free choice in the rational animal[2] and who has made the natural things pursue their course – chance being but an excess of what is natural, as has been made clear, and its largest part partakes of nature, free choice, and volition – it follows necessarily from all this that it may be said with regard to what proceeds necessarily from these causes that God has commanded that something should be done in such and such a way or that He has said: Let this be thus. I shall cite for you examples of all these cases; draw an analogy to all those I have not mentioned.

Speaking of natural things, which always follow their course, such as the melting of the snow when the air becomes warm and waves being stirred up to a certain extent in the sea when the wind blows, it says: *He sendeth forth His word, and melteth them;*[3] *For He commanded, and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves thereof.*[4] About the falling of rain, it says: *I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it, and so on.*[5]

When speaking of things the cause of which lies with human free choice – such as the war waged by a ruling people upon another people or an

1. I.e., the animals other than man. 2. I.e., man. 3. Ps. 147:18.
4. Ps. 107:25. 5. Isa. 5:6.

individual's setting out to harm another individual, even if he only insults him—it says, for instance when treating of the tyranny of *the wicked Nebuchadnezzar* and his armies:[6] *I have commanded My consecrated ones, yea I have called My mighty ones for Mine anger.*[7] And it also says: *I will send him against a hypocritical nation.*[8] Dealing with the story of *Shimei, son of Gera*, it says: *Because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.*[9] With regard to the deliverance of *Joseph the righteous* from prison, it says: *He sent a king and loosed him.*[10] With reference to the victory of the *Persians* and the *Medes* over the *Kasdim*, it says: *And I will send unto Babylon scatterers who shall scatter her.*[11] In the story of *Elijah, peace be on him*, when | for his benefit God caused a woman to feed him, he is told: *Behold, I have commanded a widowed woman there to sustain thee.*[12] And *Joseph the righteous* says: *It was not you that sent me hither, but God.*[13]

When speaking of things the cause of which lies with the volition of animals and their being set in motion by their animal impulses, it says: *And the Lord spoke unto the fish.*[14] This means that it was God who aroused in it that particular volition, not that He turned the fish into a prophet and sent it a prophetic revelation. In a similar way it is said of the locusts that came in the days of *Joel, son of Pethuel: For he is mighty that executeth His word.*[15] Again in a similar way it is said of the fact that wild beasts gained mastery over the *land of Edom* after it had been devastated in the days of *Sennacherib: And He hath cast the lot for them, and His hand hath divided it unto them by line.*[16] Though the *expressions to say, to command*, and *to send*, are not used there, yet its meaning is clearly analogous. Compare analogically all other dicta having the same pattern.

Likewise when speaking of accidental things due to pure chance, it says in the story of *Rebekah: And let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.*[17] In the story of *David and Jonathan*, it says: *Go, for the Lord hath sent thee away.*[18] And in the story of *Joseph*, it says: *And God sent me before you.*[19]

Accordingly it has become clear to you that in order to designate the shaping of the causes in whatever way they are shaped, whether they are causes by essence or by accident or by free choice or by volition, these

6. As Munk remarks, following Ibn Kaspi, this reference is not correct; for the verse of Isaiah quoted immediately after it seems to refer to the army of the Medes setting out to conquer Babylon.
7. Isa. 13:3. 8. Isa. 10:6. 9. II Sam. 16:10. 10. Ps. 105:20.
11. Jer. 51:2. 12. I Kings 17:9. 13. Gen. 45:8. Joseph says this to his brothers.
14. Jonah 2:11. 15. Joel 2:11. 16. Isa. 34:17.
17. Gen. 24:51. The choice of Rebekah as Isaac's wife was due to chance.
18. I Sam. 20:22. David's going away was due to chance. 19. Gen. 45:7.

five terms are used – namely, *to command*, *to say*, *to speak*, *to send*, *to call*. Know this and reflect upon it regarding every passage in the way that fits it. Then many incongruities will disappear, and the true reality of the matter will become clear to you in the passage in question, which could be fancied to be remote from the truth.

This is the end to which my discussion of prophecy, | its parables, and its expressions, has finally led me; and that is the sum of what I shall tell you regarding this subject in this Treatise. We shall go on to other subjects

with the help of the Almighty [Shaddai].

*

This Second Part

OF THE GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED

HAS BEEN COMPLETED

THE THIRD PART

of

The Guide of the Perplexed

*

In the name of the Lord, God of the World[1]

[INTRODUCTION]

We have already made it clear several times that the chief aim of this Treatise is to explain what can be explained of the *Account of the Beginning* and the *Account of the Chariot*, with a view to him for whom this Treatise has been composed. We have already made it clear that these matters belong to *the mysteries of the Torah*, and you know that [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, blame those who divulge *the mysteries of the Torah*. They, *may their memory be blessed*, have already made it clear that the reward of him who conceals *the mysteries of the Torah*, which are clear and manifest to the men of speculation, is very great. At the conclusion of *Pesaḥim*, when speaking of the signification of the dictum[2]—*For her gain shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat their fill, and limekhasse athiq*[3]—they say: *For him who covers the things revealed by the Ancient of Days, namely, the mysteries of the Torah.*[4] Understand the extent of that toward which they give guidance, if you are of those that understand. They have already made it clear how secret the *Account of the Chariot* was and how foreign to the mind of the multitude. And it has been made clear that even that portion of it that becomes clear to him who has been given access to the understanding of it, is subject to a legal prohibition against its being taught and explained except orally to one man having certain stated qualities, and even to that one only the *chapter headings* may be mentioned. This | is the reason why the knowledge of this matter has ceased to exist in the entire religious community, so that nothing great or small remains of it. And it had to happen like this, for this knowledge was only transmitted from one chief[5] to another and has never been set down in writing. If this is so, what stratagem can I use to draw attention toward that which may have appeared to me as indubitably clear, manifest, and evident in my opinion, according to what I have understood in these matters? On the other hand, if I had omitted setting down something of that which has appeared to me as clear,

1. Gen. 21:33. Cf. above, Epistle Dedicatory, n. 1. 2. Isa. 23:18.
3. Translated in the English Bible: *for stately clothing*. The meaning of these two words is not clear. They may signify: *in order to have luxurious garments*. Taken literally, however, they may mean: *for him who covers the Ancient*. The latter seems to be the interpretation adopted in the talmudic passage quoted in the text.
4. B.T., Pesaḥim, 119a.
5. *ṣadr*. The Arabic word means both "breast" and "chief" or "principal."

so that that knowledge would perish when I perish, as is inevitable, I should have considered that conduct as extremely cowardly with regard to you and everyone who is perplexed. It would have been, as it were, robbing one who deserves the truth of the truth, or begrudging an heir his inheritance. And both those traits are blameworthy. On the other hand, as has been stated before, an explicit exposition of this knowledge is denied by a legal prohibition, in addition to that which is imposed by judgment.[6] In addition to this there is the fact that in that which has occurred to me with regard to these matters, I followed conjecture and supposition; no divine revelation has come to me to teach me that the intention in the matter in question was such and such, nor did I receive what I believe in these matters from a teacher. But the texts of the prophetic books and the dicta of the *Sages*, together with the speculative premises that I possess, showed me that things are indubitably so and so. Yet it is possible that they are different and that something else is intended. Now rightly guided reflection and divine aid in this matter have moved me to a position, which I shall describe. Namely, I shall interpret to you that which was said by *Ezekiel the prophet*, peace be on him, in such a way that anyone who heard that interpretation would think that I do not say anything over and beyond what is indicated by the text, but that it is as if I translated words from one language to another or summarized the meaning of the external sense of the speech. On the other hand, if that interpretation is examined with a perfect care by him for whom this Treatise is composed and who has understood | all its chapters – every chapter in its turn – the whole matter, which has become clear and manifest to me, will become clear to him so that nothing in it will remain hidden from him. This is the ultimate term that it is possible to attain in combining utility[7] for everyone with abstention from explicit statements in teaching anything about this subject – as is obligatory.[8]

After this introduction has preceded, apply your mind to the chapters that will follow concerning this great, noble, and sublime subject, which is *a stake upon which everything hangs and a pillar upon which everything is supported.*[9]

6. *ra'y*. Literally: opinion. 7. Or: teaching.
8. Syntactically it is not clear in the Arabic text whether the words rendered "as is obligatory" refer to "in combining" or to "abstention." The sense of the sentence is not affected.
9. The Hebrew does not seem to be an exact quotation. The first part of the phrase (up through "everything hangs") has a parallel in J.T., Berakhoth, IV, 19a; the second part, in the Bible, Judg. 16:26.

CHAPTER 1

It is known that there are men the form of whose faces resembles that of one of the other animals, so that one may see an individual whose face resembles that of a lion and another individual whose face resembles that of an ox and so forth. It is according to the shapes that tend to have a likeness to those of animals that people are nicknamed. Thus his saying: *The face of an ox and the face of a lion and the face of an eagle;*[1] all of them merely indicate *the face of a man* that tends to have a likeness to forms belonging to these species. Two proofs indicate this to you. One of them is his saying with regard to the *living creatures* in general: *And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.*[2] Thereafter he describes every *living creature* among them as having *the face of a man and the face of an eagle and the face of a lion and the face of an ox.* The second proof is his explanation in the second *Chariot*, which he set forth in order to explain things left obscure in the first *Chariot.* He says in the second *Chariot:* | *And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.*[3] Thus he explicitly indicates that what he had called *the face of an ox* is *the face of the cherub.* Now *cherub* designates a human being of tender age. With regard to the two remaining faces, the analogy likewise applies. Also he has omitted in this passage *the face of an ox* in order to draw attention to a certain derivation of words, as we have indicated in a flash.[4] It is impossible to say: Perhaps this was an apprehension of other forms. For he says at the end of this second description: *This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Khebar.*[5] Thus that which we have begun to make clear has already become clear.

CHAPTER 2

He[1] states that he saw four *living creatures* and that every *living creature* among them had four faces, four wings, and two hands. As a whole, the form of each creature was that of a man; as he says: *They had the likeness of a man.*[2] He also states that their two hands were likewise the hands of a man,

1. Ezek. 1:10. 2. Ezek. 1:5. 3. Ezek. 10:14. 4. Cf. II 43. 5. Ezek. 10:20.
1. Ezekiel. 2. Ezek. 1:5.

it being known that a man's hands are indubitably formed as they are in order to be engaged in the arts of craftsmanship. Then he states that their feet are straight; he means that they have no articulations. This is the meaning of his dictum, *straight feet*,[3] according to its external sense. [The Sages] have likewise said: *And their feet were straight feet—this teaches [us] that above*,[4] *there is no sitting*.[5] Understand this also. Then he states that the soles of their two feet, which are instruments for walking, are not like the feet of a man, whereas their hands | are like the hands of a man. For the feet were round, *Like the sole of a calf's* [*ᶜegel*] *foot*.[6] Then he states that there is no interval and no space between those four *living creatures*, each of them adhering to the other; he says, *Coupled together, a woman to her sister*.[7] Then he states that though they adhered to one another, their faces and their wings were separated above; he says: *And their faces and their wings were separated above*.[8] Consider his saying *above*. For only the bodies adhered to one another, whereas their faces and their wings were separated, but only from above. That is why he says: *And their faces and their wings were separated above*. Then he states that they were brilliant *like the color of burnished brass*.[9] Then he states that they also gave light; he says: *Their appearance was like coals of fire*.[10] This is all that he says concerning the form of the *living creatures*, I mean their shape, their substance, their forms, their wings, their hands, and their feet.

Then he began to describe the manner of the motions of these *living creatures*. Regarding these he states that which you will hear. He says that in the motions of the *living creatures*, there was no turning, no deviation, and no curve, but only one motion. For he says: *They turned not when they went*.[11] Then he states that each of the *living creatures* went in the direction toward which its face was turned. For he says: *Each goes in the direction of its face*.[12] Thus he makes it clear that each *living creature* went only in the direction that was contiguous to its face. Would only that I knew to which face, for they had many faces. However, to sum up, the four did not all of them go in one direction. For if it had been so, he would not have assigned to each of them a separate motion, saying: *Each goes in the direction of its face*. Then he states that the form of the motion of these *living creatures* was running and that it was likewise by running that they retraced their way.

3. Ezek. 1:7. 4. I.e., in the upper world. 5. Genesis Rabbah, LXV.
6. Ezek. 1:7. The word *ᶜegel* (calf) has the same radicals as the verb and adjective *ᶜagol* (to be round, round). Maimonides implies that the word used in this verse has, or contains an allusion to, this meaning.
7. Ezek. 1:9. 8. Ezek. 1:11. 9. Ezek. 1:7. 10. Ezek. 1:13.
11. Ezek. 1:12. 12. Ezek. 1:9.

For he says: *And the living creatures ran and returned* [*raṣo va-shob*].[13] For *raṣo* is the infinitive of the verb *raṣ* [*to run*] and *shob* is the infinitive of the verb | *shab* [*to return*]. He did not use the verbs *halokh* [*to go*] and *bo* [*to come*], but said that their motion consisted in running and retracing their way. And he made it clear in an image, saying: *As the appearance of a flash of lightning* [*bazaq*].[14] For *bazaq* is another word for *baraq* [*lightning*]. Accordingly he says that it is like *lightning* [*baraq*], whose motion appears to be the swiftest of motions and which stretches out rapidly and at a rush from a certain place and then with the same rapidity contracts and returns time after time to the place whence it moved. *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him, interpreted the words *raṣo va-shob* as follows: *They went round the world and returned* [*as*] *one creature and rapid as the appearance of lightning.* Then he[15] states that the motion takes place, not because of the direction toward which the *living creature* moves in this motion of running and retracing one's way, but because of something else, I mean the divine purpose. Accordingly he says that it is in the direction toward which the *living creature* should move according to the divine purpose that it accomplishes this rapid movement, which is a *running and returning* [*raṣo va-shobh*]. For he says concerning the *living creatures: Whither the air* [*ruaḥ*] *will be* [*yihyeh*] *they will go; they turned not when they went.*[16] *Ruaḥ* here does not mean wind, but purpose, as we have made clear when speaking of the equivocality of *ruaḥ*.[17] He says accordingly that the *living creature* runs in the direction in which it is the divine purpose that the *living creature* run. *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him, has already interpreted this too in a similar way, saying: *They went wherever the will was that they should go, and they did not turn when going.* Now inasmuch as his saying reads, *Whither the air will be they will go*, and consequently its outer meaning signifies that sometimes God will wish in the future that the *living creature* should go in a certain direction and then it would take that direction and sometimes again He will wish that it should go in another direction different from the first and it would go accordingly; he[18] goes back to the passage and explains this obscure point, | letting us know that this is not so and that *yihyeh* [*will be*] has here the meaning *hayah* [*has been*], as is often the case in Hebrew. Thus the direction in which God wished the *living creature* to go had been determined; the *living creature* takes the direction that God had wished it to take; and the will[19] is constant regarding this direction. In order to explain this matter and to complete what he has to say about it, he says in

13. Ezek. 1:14. 14. Ezek. 1:14. 15. I.e., the prophet.
16. Ezek. 1:12. 17. Cf. I 40. 18. I.e., the prophet. 19. Of God.

another *verse: Whithersoever the air*[20] *will go, they will go thither, as the air*[20] *to go.*[21] Understand this wondrous explanation. This too belongs to his description of the form of the motion of the four *living creatures*, which comes after the description of their shapes.

Then he started upon another description, saying that he had seen a single body beneath the *living creatures* and adhering to them. This body was joined to the earth and also formed four bodies and likewise had four faces. He does not ascribe to it any form at all, neither a man's form nor another form pertaining to living beings, but states that they were great, terrible, and fearful bodies without ascribing to them any shape at all. He states that all their bodies were *eyes.*[22] They are those that he calls *wheels* [*ophannim*], saying: *And I saw the living creatures, and, behold, one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.*[23] Accordingly he has made it clear that it was a single body whose one extremity was *by the living creatures* while the other was on the earth, and that this *wheel* had four faces. He says: *The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl; and they four had one likeness.*[24] Thus after having spoken of one *wheel*, he goes on to speak of *four*. Accordingly he makes it quite clear that the four *faces* that the *wheel* has are the four *wheels*. Then he states that the shape of the four *wheels* is one and the same, for he says: *And the four had one likeness.* Then he explains with regard to these *wheels* that they | were encased one within the other, for he says: *And their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel within* [*be-tokh*] *a wheel.*[25] This is an expression that is not used with regard to the *living creatures;* for he does not use with regard to the *living creatures* the word *tokh* [*within*]. Rather do they adhere to each other; as he says: *Coupled together, a woman to her sister.*[26] As for the *wheels*, he states that they were encased one within the other, *as it were a wheel within a wheel.* As for the whole body of the *wheels* of which he says that it was *full of eyes* [*ᶜeinayim*],[27] it is possible that he meant that they were really full of eyes; but it is also possible that he meant that they had many colors, as in the passage: *And the color thereof* [*ve-ᶜeino*] *as the color of* [*ke-ᶜein*] *bdellium.*[28] It is likewise possible that he meant that they were likenesses, just as we find that the ancient masters of the language say, *Ke-ᶜein she-ganab, ke-ᶜein she-gazal,*[29] meaning: Like

20. *ruaḥ*. According to Maimonides' explanation: *the purpose.* 21. Ezek. 1:20.
22. Cf. Ezek. 1:18. 23. Ezek. 1:15.
24. Ezek. 1:16. 25. Ezek. 1:16. 26. Ezek. 1:9. 27. Cf. Ezek. 1:18.
28. Num. 11:7. In this passage, the word *ᶜayin*, which usually means "eye," signifies "color."
29. Cf. B.T., Baba Qamma, 65a and 66. The word *ke-ᶜein*, in which the word *ᶜayin* (eye) is included, means in this passage: *like unto.*

unto what one has stolen, like unto what one has robbed. [The word "ᶜeinayim" may also mean] various states and attributes, as in its dictum:[30] *It may be that the Lord will look be-ᶜeini*[31] – he means, [on] my state. This is what he describes with regard to the form of the *wheels*.

As for the motion of the *wheels*, he again says that there was in their motion no curve, no turning, and no deviation; there were only straight motions that did not vary. This is his saying: *When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not when they went.*[32] Then he states that these four *wheels* do not move essentially, as do the *living creatures*; for they have no essential motion at all, moving only when moved by something other than themselves. He insistently repeats this notion and reaffirms it several times. And he makes out that the movers[33] of the *wheels* are none other than the *living creatures*, so that, to use an image, the relation of a *wheel* to a *living creature* could be likened to what happens when one ties an inanimate body to the hands and the feet of a living being: every time the living being moves, the piece of timber or the stone tied to a limb of that living being moves likewise. Accordingly he says: *And when the living creatures went, | the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.*[34] And he also says: *And the wheels were lifted up facing them.*[35] And he explains the cause of this, saying: *For the air of the living creature was in the wheels.*[36] He repeats this notion in order to confirm it and to make it understood, saying: *When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up facing them; for the air of the living creature was in the wheels.*[37]

Accordingly the order of these motions is as follows: The *living creatures* moved in whatever direction it was the divine purpose that the *living creatures* should move, and by the motion of the *living creatures* the *wheels* were moved, following the former through being bound to them. For the *wheels* do not of their own accord move the *living creatures*. And he sets forth the order of that grade, saying: *Whithersoever the air will go, they will go thither, as the air to go; and the wheels were lifted up facing them; for the air of the living creature was in the wheels.*[38] I have already made known to you the translation of *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him: *Wherever the will was that they should go, and so on.*

When he had finished the description of the *living creatures*, of their

30. II Sam. 16:12. 31. I.e., in my *ᶜayin*. 32. Ezek. 1:17.
33. In the singular in Arabic. 34. Ezek. 1:19. 35. Ezek. 1:20.
36. Ezek. 1:20. 37. Ezek. 1:21. 38. Ezek. 1:20.

forms, and of their motions, and had mentioned the *wheels* that are beneath the *living creatures*, their being bound to the latter and moved with their motion, he starts to set forth a third apprehension that he had and goes back to another description concerning that which is above the *living creatures*. He says that above the four *living creatures*, there is a *firmament;* upon the *firmament, the likeness of a throne;*[39] and upon the *throne, a likeness as the appearance of a man.*[40] This is the whole of the description he has made of what he has first apprehended *by the river of Khebar.* |

CHAPTER 3

After *Ezekiel*, peace be on him, had set forth the description of the *Chariot* as given in the beginning of the book, the selfsame apprehension returned to him a second time when, *in a vision of prophecy*, he was borne *to Jerusalem*. Thereupon he explained to us things that at first had not been explained. Thus for our benefit he replaced the word *living creatures* by the word *cherubim*, making it known to us that the *living creatures* that were mentioned at first are also angels – I mean, the *cherubim*. He says: *And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them.*[1] Thus he confirms the fact that, as we have mentioned, the two motions were bound together. Then he says: *This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Khebar; and I knew that they were the cherubim.*[2] Accordingly he repeats the description of the selfsame forms and the selfsame motions and makes it clear that the *living creatures* are the *cherubim* and the *cherubim* are the *living creatures*. Thereupon he explains in this second description another notion, namely, the notion that the *wheels* [*ophannim*] are the *galgallim*[3] [*spheres*]; he says:[4] *As for the wheels* [*ophannim*], *they were called in my hearing*: *Hagalgal.*[5] Then he explains a third notion regarding the *wheels* [*ophannim*],

39. Ezek. 1:22. 40. Ezek. 1:26.
1. Ezek. 10:16. 2. Ezek. 10:20.
3. The word *galgallim*, meaning "wheels" (like the word *ophannim*), has in later Hebrew the signification of "heavenly spheres."
4. Ezek. 10:13.
5. In the English Bible, this word is translated: *the wheelwork*. Maimonides takes it to refer to the heavenly spheres.

saying with reference to them: *But to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.*[6] Thus he states explicitly that the compulsory motion of the *wheels* followed *to the place whither the head looked.* That is to say, as he has explained, it followed *whither the air will be.*[7] Then he adds a fourth notion regarding the *wheels*; he says: *And the wheels were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.*[8] | He did not mention this notion at first. Then he says in this last apprehension with regard to the *wheels: their flesh and their backs and their hands and their wings.*[9] At first he had not mentioned that the wheels had *flesh* or *hands* or *wings*, but only that they were bodies. Finally, however, he goes so far as to say that they have flesh, hands, and wings; but he does not ascribe to them any form whatever. In this second apprehension he also explains that every *wheel* is related to a *cherub*, saying: *One wheel beside one cherub, and another wheel beside another cherub.*[10] He also explains there that the four *living creatures* are *one living creature* because of the adherence of all of them to one another; for he says: *This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Khebar.*[11] Similarly he calls the *wheels*, *One wheel upon the earth*,[12] in spite of there being, as he also mentions, *four wheels*; and this because of their being joined to one another and of their having[13] all *four one likeness.*[14] These are the explanations, regarding the forms of the *living creatures* and the *wheels*, that are added for our benefit in this second apprehension.

CHAPTER 4

It behooves us to draw your attention to a certain thought adopted by *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him. When he saw the explicit statement,[1] *As for the wheels* [*ophannim*], *they were called in my hearing: Hagalgal* [*the sphere*],[2] he categorically decided that the *wheels* [*ophannim*] are the heavens. Accordingly he translated in every case *ophan* [*wheel*] by *galgala* [*sphere*][3] and *ophannim* [*wheels*] by *galgalaya* [*spheres*]. I have no doubt that to his mind, peace be on him, this interpretation was corroborated | by the dictum of *Ezekiel*, peace be on him, regarding the

6. Ezek. 10:11. 7. Cf. Ezek. 1:20. Cf. preceding chapter. 8. Ezek. 10:12.
9. Ezek. 10:12. 10. Ezek. 10:9. 11. Ezek. 10:20. 12. Ezek. 1:15.
13. Literally: being all of them. 14. Ezek. 1:16.
1. Ezek. 10:13. 2. Cf. preceding chap., n. 3. 3. Cf. preceding chap., n. 3.

wheels [*ophannim*] that they were *like unto the color of a beryl*,[4] a color that is that attributed to the heavens, as is generally known. However, when he found the text, *Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth*,[5] which indubitably indicates that the *wheels* are *upon the earth*, this appeared to him to constitute a difficulty with regard to this interpretation. Accordingly he went further in his interpretation, interpreting [the word] *earth* in this passage as referring to the surface of heaven, which is an *earth* with respect to what is above it. Accordingly he translated: *One wheel upon the earth beneath the height of heaven.* Understand this interpretation as it is in reality. It seems to me that he was led to this interpretation by his belief, peace be on him, that *galgal* is a term designating in the first place the heavens. It seems, however, to me that the matter is as follows. The [Hebrew] term for rolling is *galgel*. Thus: *And roll thee down* [*ve-gilgaltikha*] *from the rocks*;[6] *And rolled* [*va-yagel*] *the stone*.[7] For this reason it is said, *And like a rolling thing* [*u-khe-galgal*] *before the whirlwind*,[8] because of its rolling. For this reason too the cranium is called *gulgoleth*, because of its being nearly round. Because every sphere rolls rapidly, every spherical thing was called *galgal*. Hence the heavens were called *galgallim* because of their being round—I mean, because of their being spherical. Accordingly [the Sages] say [with reference to fate]: *it is a revolving galgal* [*sphere*].[9] For the selfsame reason they likewise call a pulley *galgal*. Accordingly [Ezekiel's] dictum—*As for the wheels* [*ophannim*], *they were called in my hearing: Hagalgal*[10]—makes their shape known to us. For he does not ascribe to them any shape or form except by saying that they are *galgallim*.

With regard to his saying about them, *like unto beryl*,[11] he interprets this also in the second description, saying with regard to the *wheels* [*ophannim*]: *And the appearance of the wheels was as the color of a beryl stone*.[12] *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him, translated this: *like unto a precious stone*. Now you know already that *Onqelos* used this very expression to translate: *As it were, a work of the whiteness of sapphire stone*;[13] he says: *As the work of a precious stone*. There is consequently no difference | between its saying, *As the color of a beryl stone*, and its saying, *As it were, a work of the whiteness of sapphire stone*. Understand this.

You must not find it incongruous that, having mentioned the interpretation of *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him, I propounded a different interpretation. You will find that many among the *Sages*, and even among

4. Ezek. 1:16. 5. Ezek. 1:15. 6. Jer. 51:25. 7. Gen. 29:10.
8. Isa. 17:13. 9. B.T., Shabbath, 151b. 10. Ezek. 10:13.
11. Cf. Ezek. 1:16. 12. Ezek. 10:9. 13. Exod. 24:10.

the commentators, differ from his interpretation with regard to certain words and many notions that are set forth by the *prophets*. How could this not be with regard to these obscure matters? Moreover I do not oblige you to decide in favor of my interpretation.[14] Understand the whole of his interpretation from that to which I have drawn your attention, and understand my interpretation. God knows in which of the two interpretations there is a correspondence to what has been intended.

CHAPTER 5

Among the things to which your attention ought to be directed is his[1] expression: *visions of God*.[2] He does not say *vision*, in the singular, but *visions*, because there were many apprehensions differing in species; I mean to say three apprehensions, that of the *wheels*, that of the *living creatures*, and that of the *man*, who is above the *living creatures*. With regard to every apprehension he says: *And I saw*. Thus with reference to the apprehension of the *living creatures* he says: *And I saw, and, behold, a whirlwind, and so on;*[3] with reference to the apprehension of the *wheels* he says: *And I saw the living creatures, and, behold, one wheel upon the earth;*[4] and with reference to the *man*, who in degree is above the *living creatures*, he says: *And I saw as the color of ḥashmal,*[5] *and so on, from the appearance of his loins, and so on.*[6] In the description of the *Chariot*, he only repeats the word *I saw* these three times. The *Sages of the Mishnah* have already explained this matter; in fact it is they who drew my attention to it. For they said that it is permissible to teach the first two apprehensions only, I mean | the apprehension of the *living creatures* and that of the *wheels;* whereas only *the chapter headings* may be taught with regard to the third apprehension, that of the *ḥashmal* and of what is connected with it. However, *our holy Rabbi*[7] believes that all three apprehensions are called the *Account of the Chariot* and that with respect to none of them may anything other than *the chapter headings* be taught. Their text with regard to this is as follows: *Till where* [*is it permissible to teach*] *the Account of the Chariot? Rabbi Meir says: Till the last*

14. Or, according to certain manuscripts: of one interpretation.
1. I.e., Ezekiel's. 2. Ezek. 1:1. 3. Ezek. 1:4. 4. Ezek. 1:15.
5. Several explanations of this Hebrew word are set forth below in III 7.
6. Ezek. 1:27. 7. I.e., Rabbi Judah, compiler of the Mishnah.

"And I saw."[8] *Rabbi Isaac says: Till* [*the word*] *"ḥashmal." From* [*the first*] *"And I saw"*[9] *till* [*the word*] *"ḥashmal,"* [*it is permissible*] *to teach; from there on the chapter headings are transmitted to* [*the disciple*]. *Some say: from* [*the first*] *"And I saw" till* [*the word*] *"ḥashmal," the chapter headings are transmitted to him; from there on,* [*he may be taught*] *if he is a wise man, understanding in virtue of his own intelligence; and* [*he may*] *not, if* [*he is*] *not* [*that*].[10] It has thus become clear to you from their texts that there were various apprehensions to which attention is drawn by the expression: *And I saw, And I saw, And I saw;* that these signified different degrees; and that the last apprehension, that referred to in the words: *And I saw as the color of ḥashmal*[11]—I mean the apprehension of the form of the divided man of which it is said: *From the appearance of his loins and upward, and from the appearance of his loins and downward*[12]—is the ultimate perception and the highest of all. There is also a difference of opinion among the *Sages* about whether it is permissible for it to be alluded to in any way through teaching—I mean to say *through the transmission of the chapter headings*—or whether it is not permissible in any way that an allusion be made to the teaching of this third apprehension, though it be only *through the chapter headings;* but he who is a *wise man will understand in virtue of his own intelligence.* Similarly there is also, as you see, a difference of opinion among the *Sages* with regard to the first two apprehensions likewise—I mean those concerning the *living creatures* and the *wheels*—about whether it is permissible to teach explicitly the notions concerning them, or whether this is only permitted to be done through allusions and enigmas *through the chapter headings.*

You ought also to have your attention directed to the order of these | three apprehensions. Thus he[13] has put first the apprehension of the *living creatures,* for they come first because of their nobility and of their causality —according to what he says: *For the air of the living creature was in the wheels*[14]—and because of other things too. After the *wheels* comes the third apprehension, which is higher in degree than that of the *living creatures,* as is clear. The reason for this lies in the fact that the first two apprehensions necessarily precede the third apprehension in the order of knowledge, the latter being inferred with the help of the other two.

8. Ezek. 1:27. 9. Ezek. 1:4. 10. B.T., Ḥagigah, 13a. 11. Ezek. 1:27.
12. Ezek. 1:27. 13. I.e., Ezekiel. 14. Ezek. 1:20.

CHAPTER 6

Know that the great and sublime notion that *Ezekiel*, peace be on him—being moved by the prophetic motive force that incited him to let us know this began to teach us in describing the *Chariot* is the very notion that *Isaiah*, peace be on him, let us know summarily without having the need to go into these details. For he says: *And I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. The seraphim stood, and so on.*[1] The *Sages* have explained all this to us and have called our attention to this subject. They said that the apprehension grasped by *Ezekiel* was identical with that grasped by *Isaiah*. They made about it a comparison with two men who saw the ruler while the latter was riding: one of them belonged to the settled population and the other to the desert nomads. Because the former knew that city people know in what state the ruler rides, he did not describe that state, but said only: I saw the ruler. The latter, however, wishing to describe this to the desert nomads, | who have no knowledge at all regarding the state in which the ruler rides, described to them in detail this state and the characteristic of the ruler's troops, his servants, and those who execute his orders. An intimation of this scope is of very great utility. I refer to their dictum in *Ḥagigah: All that was seen by Ezekiel was [likewise] seen by Isaiah. Isaiah is like unto a city man who saw the king; whereas Ezekiel is like unto a villager who saw the king.*[2] It is possible that this text was interpreted by its author in accordance with what I have said at the beginning [of the chapter]: namely, that the contemporaries of *Isaiah* had no need of his expounding those details to them, it being sufficient for them that he said: *And I saw the Lord, and so on;* whereas *the people of the Exile* required these details. It is also possible that the author of this remark believed that *Isaiah* was more perfect than *Ezekiel*, and that the apprehension that amazed *Ezekiel* and was regarded by him as terrible was known by *Isaiah* through a knowledge the exposition of which did not require extraordinary language, the subject being well known to those who are perfect.

1. Isa. 6:1–2. 2. B.T., Ḥagigah, 13b.

CHAPTER 7

To the whole of things requiring investigation belongs the tying of the apprehension of the *Chariot* to a year, a month, and a day, and also to a place. This is something the significance of which ought to be sought. It should not be thought that this is a matter without significance. To the things that ought to be considered, for it is the key[1] to the whole, belongs his saying: *The heavens were opened.*[2] This is something that frequently occurs in the speech of the prophets – I mean the use of the figurative expressions of the opening and also of the opening of gates: *Open ye the gates;*[3] *And He opened the doors of heaven;*[4] *Yea, lift up the openings of the world;*[5] *Open to me | the gates of righteousness.*[6] This occurs frequently.

Among the things to which your attention ought to be directed belongs the fact that though this whole description[7] is based indubitably *on a vision of prophecy* – for as he says: *And the hand of the Lord was there upon him*[8] – there is between various parts of this description a very great difference in expression. For when he speaks of the *living creatures*, he says, *The likeness of four living creatures*, and does not only say, *Four living creatures.*[9] Similarly he says: *And the likeness of the firmament was upon the heads of the living creature;*[10] and: *The likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone;*[11] and: *The likeness as the appearance of a man.*[12] With regard to all this he uses the expression: *likeness*. With regard to the *wheels*, however, he by no means says concerning them, *the likeness of a wheel* or *the likeness of wheels*, but makes absolute statements regarding what they really are in a form expressive of that which really exists. Be not misled by his saying, *And the four had one likeness,*[13] for this dictum is not ordered in the same way and has not the signification referred to. In the last apprehension he corroborates and explains this notion. He mentions the *firmament* in an absolute manner, beginning as he does with it and setting forth the details concerning it; he says: *Then I saw, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.*[14] Thus he speaks

1. The Arabic and the Hebrew words for "key" derive from the same verbal root, which means in both languages, "to open."
2. Ezek. 1:1. 3. Isa. 26:2. 4. Ps. 78:23.
5. Ps. 24:9. In the English Bible this is translated: *Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors.*
6. Ps. 118:19. 7. That of Ezekiel. 8. Ezek. 1:3. 9. Ezek. 1:5.
10. Ezek. 1:22. 11. Ezek. 1:26. 12. Ezek. 1:26. 13. Ezek. 1:16.
14. Ezek. 10:1.

in this passage about the *firmament* in an absolute manner and does not say *the likeness of the firmament* as was the case when he spoke of it in connection with *the heads of the likeness of the living creatures.* As for the *throne* he says, *There appeared over them the likeness of a throne,* this being a proof that the apprehension of the *firmament* came first and that afterwards *there appeared to him over it the likeness of a throne.* Understand this.

Among the things to which your attention ought to be directed belongs the fact that in the first apprehension he states that the *living creatures* had both wings and the *hands of a man;* whereas in the second apprehension in which he explains that the *living creatures* are *cherubim,* he apprehended in the first place | only their wings, the *hands of a man* appearing in them afterwards in the course of his apprehension; for he says: *And there appeared in the cherubim the shape* [*tabnith*] *of a man's hand under their wings.*[15] His saying *shape* [*tabnith*] is analogous to his saying *likeness* [*demuth*]. And the place of this[16] is *under their wings.* Understand this.

Consider also how he makes an explicit statement in his dictum, *And the wheels were facing them,*[17] though he does not ascribe a form to them.

He also says: *And the appearance of the rainbow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.*[18] The matter, the true reality, and the essence of the *rainbow* that is described are known. This is the most extraordinary comparison possible, as far as parables and similitudes are concerned; and it is indubitably due to a prophetic force. Understand this.

Among the things to which your attention should be drawn belongs his dividing *the likeness of the man that was on the throne;* the upper part of the likeness being *as the color of ḥashmal* and the lower *as the appearance of fire.*[19] They[20] have explained[21] that the word *ḥashmal* is composed of two notions, *ḥash* and *mal*; this means, of the notion of rapidity, indicated by *ḥash*, and of that of cutting, indicated by *mal*, the intention being to combine through a simile two separate notions regarding two sides, above and below. They also give us a second hint, saying that the word derives from the notions of speech and silence, saying that *they*[22] *sometimes ḥashoth* [*are silent*] *and sometimes memalleloth* [*speak*]. They ascribe the meaning "silence" [to "ḥash"] from the verse: *heḥesheiti* [*I have been silent*] *for a long time;*[23] there is thus an allusion to two notions through the indication of speech

15. Ezek. 10:8. 16. I.e., of *the shape of a man's hand.* 17. Ezek. 10:19.
18. Ezek. 1:28. 19. Cf. Ezek. 1:27 and 8:2. 20. I.e., the talmudic Sages.
21. B.T., Ḥagigah, 13a–b. 22. I.e., the *ḥashmallim.* 23. Isa. 42:14.

without a sound. There is no doubt that their dictum, *they sometimes are silent* [*ḥashoth*] *and sometimes speak* [*memalleloth*], refers to a created thing. See accordingly how they have made it quite clear to us that *the likeness of a man that was on the throne* and that was divided, is not a parable referring to Him, who is exalted above all composition, but to a created thing. Accordingly the *prophet* himself says: *This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.*[24] Now *the glory of the Lord* is not the *Lord*, as we have made clear several times. Accordingly everything | to which the parables contained in these apprehensions refer is only *the glory of the Lord*, I mean to say the *Chariot*, not the *Rider*, as He, may He be exalted, may not be presented in a likeness in a parable. Understand this.

We have thus given you also in this chapter such *chapter headings* that if you combine[25] the *headings* there will emerge from them a whole that is useful with regard to this theme. If you consider all that we have said in the chapters of this Treatise up to this chapter, the greater part or the entirety of the subject in question, except for a few slight details and repetitious speech, whose meaning remains hidden, will become clear to you. Perhaps upon thorough consideration, this too will be revealed, and nothing of this will remain hidden. Do not hope that, after this chapter, you will hear from me even a single word about this subject, be it as an explicit statement or in a flashlike allusion. For everything that it is possible to say about this has been said; I have even plunged deep into this with temerity. We shall accordingly start upon other subjects from among those that, I hope, I shall explain in this Treatise.

CHAPTER 8

All bodies subject to generation and corruption are attained by corruption only because of their matter; with regard to form and with respect to the latter's essence, they are not attained by corruption, but are permanent. Do you not see that all the specific forms are perpetual and permanent? Corruption attains the form only by accident, I mean because of its being joined to matter. The nature and the true reality of matter are such that it never |

24. Ezek. 1:28.
25. Or, according to certain manuscripts and to Ibn Tibbon's translation: if you complete them.

ceases to be joined to privation; hence no form remains constantly in it, for it perpetually puts off one form and puts on another. How extraordinary is what *Solomon* said in his wisdom when likening matter *to a married harlot*,[1] for matter is in no way found without form and is consequently always like *a married woman* who is never separated from a *man* and is never *free*.[2] However, notwithstanding her being *a married woman*, she never ceases to seek for another man to substitute for her husband, and she deceives and draws him on in every way until he obtains from her what her husband used to obtain. This is the state of matter. For whatever form is found in it, does but prepare it to receive another form. And it does not cease to move with a view to putting off that form that actually is in it and to obtaining another form; and the selfsame state obtains after that other form has been obtained in actu. It has then become clear that all passing-away and corruption or deficiency are due solely to matter. Thus in the case of a man, for instance, it is clear that the deformity of his form, the fact that his limbs do not conform to their nature, and also the weakness, the cessation, or the troubling of all his functions – no matter whether all this be inherent in his natural constitution from its beginning or be only a supervening accident – that all this is consequent upon his corrupt matter and not upon his form. Similarly every living being dies and becomes ill solely because of its matter and not because of its form. All man's acts of disobedience and sins are consequent upon his matter and not upon his form, whereas all his virtues are consequent upon his form. For example, man's apprehension of his Creator, his mental representation of every intelligible, his control of his desire and his anger, his thought on what ought to be preferred[3] and what avoided, are all of them consequent upon his form. On the other hand, | his eating and drinking and copulation and his passionate desire for these things, as well as his anger and all bad habits found in him, are all of them consequent upon his matter. Inasmuch as it is clear that this is so, and as according to what has been laid down by divine wisdom it is impossible for matter to exist without form and for any of the forms in question to exist without matter, and as consequently it was necessary that man's very noble form, which, as we have explained,[4] is the *image of God and His likeness*, should be bound to earthy, turbid, and dark matter, which calls down upon man

1. Cf. Prov. 6:26. 2. Cf. above, I Introduction and 17.
3. I read *yu'thar*, in accord with one manuscript and the translation of Ibn Tibbon (and probably also that of Alḥarizi), rather than *yu'tā*, the variant suggested by other manuscripts. The latter variant could be translated: ought to be brought forward. Cf. Joel's ed., p. 310, l. 17.
4. Cf. I 1.

every imperfection and corruption; He granted it — I mean the human form — power, dominion, rule, and control over matter, in order that it subjugate it, quell its impulses, and bring it[5] back to the best and most harmonious state that is possible.

In this respect the ranks of the Adamites differ. Among men, there are individuals who aspire always to prefer that which is most noble and to seek a state of perpetual permanence according to what is required by their noble form. They only reflect on the mental representation of an intelligible, on the grasp of a true opinion regarding everything, and on union with the divine intellect, which lets overflow toward them that through which that form exists. Whenever the impulses of matter impel such an individual toward the dirt and the generally admitted shame inherent in matter, he feels pain because of his entanglement, is ashamed and abashed because of what he has gone through, and desires to diminish this shame with all his power and to be preserved from it in every way. This is like the case of a man with whom the ruler had become angry; he ordered him accordingly, with a view to humiliating him, to transport dung from one place to another. Such a man will endeavor with all his power to be hidden at the time when he is humiliated in this manner; possibly he will transport a small quantity to a nearby place, so that perhaps his hands or clothes will not be dirtied and no one | else will see him. Free men would act in this manner. A slave, however, would rejoice in this and would not consider that he has been subjected to a great hardship. He would throw himself with his whole body into this dung and filth, soil his face and hands, and carry the dung in public, laughing the while and rejoicing and clapping his hands. The state of the various classes of people is similar. As we have said, there are among men individuals to whose mind all the impulses of matter are shameful and ugly things, deficiencies imposed by necessity; particularly so the sense of touch, which, as Aristotle has stated, is a shame for us, and because of which we wish to eat, to drink, and to copulate.[6] Consequently one's recourse to these things should be reduced to the extent to which this is possible; one should do them in secret, should feel sorrowful because one does them, and not have them spoken of and discoursed about; no gathering should be held with a view to these things. A man should be in control of all these impulses, restrict his efforts in relation to them, and admit only that which is indispensable. He should take as his end that which is the end of man qua man: namely, solely the mental representation of the intelligibles, the most certain and the noblest of which being the apprehension, in as far

5. Or: them. 6. Cf. II 36, n. 8.

as this is possible, of the deity, of the angels, and of His other works. These individuals are those who are permanently with God. They are those to whom it has been said: *Ye are gods, and all of you children of the Most High.*[7] This is what is required of man; I mean to say that this is his end. As far as the others are concerned – those who are separated from God by a veil, being the multitude of the ignorant[8] – the opposite is true: They refrain from all thought and perception about any intelligible thing and take as their end the sense that is our greatest shame, I mean the sense of touch. Accordingly they have no thought and no perception except only in relation to eating and copulation, as has been stated clearly with regard to these | wretched people wholly given over to eating, drinking, and copulating. It says: *But these also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way, and so on;*[9] and it says: *For all tables are full of filthy vomit, so that there is no place.*[10] It also says: *And women rule over him;*[11] this being contrary to what was required of them in the beginning of the creation: *And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*[12] It also describes the violence of their desire; it says: *Every one neigheth after his neighbor's wife;*[13] and also: *For they are all adulterers, and so on.*[14] For this reason *Solomon* has devoted the whole of *Proverbs* to warnings against fornication and intoxicating drink. For those who are the objects of divine wrath and who are remote from God are plunged deeply into these two vices. Of them it is said: *For they are not the Lord's;*[15] and also: *Cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth.*[16]

As for [Solomon's] dictum, *A woman of virtue who can find?*,[17] and this whole parable, it is clear. For if it so happens that the matter of a man is excellent, and suitable, neither dominating him nor corrupting his constitution, that matter is a divine gift. To sum up: it is easy, as we have mentioned, to control suitable matter. If it is unsuitable, it is not impossible for someone trained to quell it. For this reason *Solomon* – both he and others – inculcated all these exhortations. Also the commandments and prohibitions of the Law are only intended to quell all the impulses of matter. It behooves him who prefers to be a human being in truth, not a beast having the shape and configuration of a human being, to endeavor to diminish all

7. Ps. 82:6.
8. Possibly the translation, "pagans," should be preferred. The word *al-jāhiliyya*, used here by Maimonides, means etymologically "the ignorant." However, in ordinary Islamic terminology, it is applied to the pre-Islamic pagans of Arabia.
9. Isa. 28:7. 10. Isa. 28:8. 11. Isa. 3:12. 12. Gen. 3:16.
13. Jer. 5:8. 14. Jer. 9:1. 15. Jer. 5:10. 16. Jer. 15:1. 17. Prov. 31:10

the impulses of matter—such as eating, drinking, copulation, anger, and all the habits consequent upon desire and anger—to be ashamed of them, and to set for them limits in his soul. With regard to what is indispensable, like eating and drinking, he must confine himself to what is most useful and to what corresponds to the need for nourishment, not to | pleasure. He must also reduce speech about, and gatherings for, such matters. You know how [the Sages] disliked *meals that are not [partaken of] with a view to a commandment*[18] and that the virtuous like *Phinehas ben Yair* never ate in somebody else's house—*our holy Rabbi*[19] wished him to eat at his house, but he did not do it.[20] What is true of eating applies to drinking, as far as their purpose is concerned. As for gatherings with a view to drinking intoxicants, you should regard them as more shameful than gatherings of naked people with uncovered private parts who excrete in daylight[21] sitting together. The explanation of this is as follows: Excreting is a necessary thing that man cannot refrain from by any device whatever, whereas being drunk is an act committed by a bad man in virtue of his free choice. The disapproval of the uncovering of the private parts is a generally accepted opinion, not a thing cognized by the intellect, whereas the corruption of the intellect and of the body is shunned by the intellect. For this reason one who prefers to be a human being ought to shun it and not to speak of it. With regard to copulation, I need not add anything to what I have said in my Commentary on *Aboth*[22] about the aversion in which it is held by what occurs in our wise and pure Law, and about the prohibition against mentioning it or against making it in any way or for any reason a subject of conversation. You know the dictum of [the Sages][23] that *Elisha*, peace be on him, was called a *Saint* only because he never thought about these matters, so that he never had a venereal dream. And you know their dictum concerning *Jacob*, peace be on him, that *he had never had a seminal emission before [engendering] Reuben.*[24] All these are things traditionally transmitted in the religious community in order to make its members acquire human habits. You know what they say: *Thoughts about sin are worse than the sin.*[25] In order to explain this, I have a very extraordinary interpretation, which is as follows: A man committing an act of disobedience does it only, as I have made clear, because of the accidents consequent upon his matter; | I mean to say that he commits an act of disobedience through his bestiality. But thought is one of the

18. B.T., Pesaḥim, 49a. 19. I.e., Rabbi Judah.
20. Cf. B.T., Ḥullin, 7a–b. 21. Literally: by day.
22. Cf. *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Aboth, I 5.
23. Cf. Leviticus Rabbah, XXIV; B.T., Berakhoth, 10b.
24. Genesis Rabbah, XCVIII and XCIX. 25. B.T., Yoma, 29a.

properties of a human being that are consequent upon his form. Consequently if he gives his thought a free scope in respect to disobedience, he commits an act of disobedience through the nobler of his two parts. Now the sin of him who does an injustice through making an ignorant slave serve him is not like the sin of him who makes a free man who is excellent serve him. For the human form and the properties consequent upon it ought only to be employed with a view to what befits it, namely, union with what is the highest, and not with a view to descending to the lowest degree.

You know the severe prohibition that obtains among us against *obscene language*.[26] This also is necessary. For speaking with the tongue is one of the properties of a human being and a benefit that is granted to him and by which he is distinguished. As it says: *Who hath made man's mouth?*[27] And the *prophet* says: *The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught*.[28] Now this benefit granted us with a view to perfection in order that we learn and teach should not be used with a view to the greatest deficiency and utter disgrace, so that one says what the ignorant and sinful *Gentiles* say in their songs and their stories, suitable for them but not for those to whom it has been said: *And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation*.[29] And whoever has applied his thought or his speech to some of the stories concerning that sense which is a disgrace to us, so that he thought more about drink or copulation than is needful or recited songs about these matters, has made use of the benefit granted to him, applying and utilizing it to commit an act of disobedience with regard to Him who has granted the benefit and to transgress His orders. He is like those of whom it is said: *And I multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal*.[30] I can also give the reason why this our language[31] is called *the Holy Language*. It should not be thought that this is, | on our part, an empty appellation[32] or a mistake; in fact it is indicative of true reality. For in this holy language no word at all has been laid down in order to designate either the male or the female organ of copulation, nor are there words designating the act itself that brings about generation, the sperm, the urine, or the excrements. No word at all designating, according to its first meaning, any of these things has been laid down in the Hebrew language, they being signified by terms used in a figurative sense and by allusions. It was intended thereby to indicate that these things ought not to be mentioned and consequently that no terms designating them should be coined. For these are things about which one

26. Cf., e.g., B.T., Kethuboth, 8b; B.T., Shabbath, 33a. 27. Exod. 4:11.
28. Isa. 50:4. 29. Exod. 19:6. 30. Hos. 2:10. 31. I.e., Hebrew.
32. *laghw*. Certain manuscripts have *ghuluww*, a word that may be translated "exaggeration." Ibn Tibbon's translation agrees with the latter version.

ought to be silent; however, when necessity impels mentioning them, a device should be found to do it by means of expressions deriving from other words, just as the most diligent endeavor should be made to be hidden when necessity impels doing these things. The male organ they have called *gid* [*sinew*], which is used because of the likeness; for they have said: *And thy neck is an iron sinew.*[33] They have also called it *shaphkha* [*instrument for pouring-out*][34] because of its function. The female organ has been called *qebatha* [*her stomach*],[35] *qeba* being the term designating the stomach. As for *reḥem* [*vulva*] it is the term designating the part of the entrails in which the fetus is formed. The term designating excrements is *ṣoʾa*, deriving from *yaṣoʾ* [*to go out*]. The term designating urine is *meme raglayim* [*waters of the feet*]. The term designating sperm is *shikhbath zeraᶜ* [*layer of seed*]. The act itself that brings about generation has no name at all, the following expressions signifying it: *yishkab* [*he lies*], *yibᶜal* [*he marries*], *yiqaḥ* [*he takes*], *yegalleh ᶜervah* [*he uncovers the nakedness*], and no others. The verb *yishgal* should not lead you into error so that you think that it is the term designating this action, for *shegal* is merely the term designating a female slave prepared for copulation. Thus: *At thy right hand doth stand the female slave.*[36] And its saying, *yishgalenah*,[37] in the text that is written,[38] means he shall take her as a slave girl for this purpose.

In the greater part of the chapter we have turned aside from the purpose of the Treatise | to deal with moral and also religious matters. However, though these matters do not wholly belong to the purpose of the Treatise, the order of the discourse has led to that.

CHAPTER 9

Matter is a strong veil preventing the apprehension of that which is separate from matter as it truly is. It does this even if it is the noblest and purest matter, I mean to say even if it is the matter of the heavenly spheres. All the more is this true for the dark and turbid matter that is ours. Hence whenever our intellect aspires to apprehend the deity or one of the

33. Isa. 48:4. 34. Deut. 23:2. 35. Num. 25:8.
36. Ps. 45:10. 37. Deut. 28:30.
38. In contradistinction to the rectification set down below the page and read when the text is recited. According to this rectification, the word should be read *yishkabenah* (he shall lie with her).

intellects,[1] there subsists this great veil interposed between the two. This is alluded to in all the books of the prophets; namely, that we are separated by a veil from God and that He is hidden from us by a heavy cloud, or by darkness or by a mist or by an enveloping cloud, and similar allusions to our incapacity to apprehend Him because of matter. This is the intention of its saying: *Clouds and darkness are round about Him;*[2] that intimates the fact that the obstacle consists in the tenebrous character of our substance, and not in His, may He be exalted, being a body surrounded by mist or an enveloping cloud or a heavy cloud, which prevents His being seen, as the external sense of the parable would indicate. Moreover this parable has been repeated, for it says: *He made darkness His hiding place.*[3] Similarly when it speaks of His manifestation, may He be exalted, *in a thick cloud*[4] and in *darkness, cloud, and thick darkness,*[5] it is also only in order that the notion in question be inferred from this manner of speech. For everything that is apprehended in *a vision of prophecy* is only a parable for some notion. And though that great assembly was greater than any *vision of prophecy* and beyond any analogy, it also indicated a | notion;[6] I refer to His manifestation, may He be exalted, *in a thick cloud.* For it draws attention to the fact that the apprehension of His true reality is impossible for us because of the dark matter that encompasses us and not Him, may He be exalted; for He, may He be exalted, is not a body. It is, moreover, well known and generally accepted in the religious community that the day of the *Gathering at Mount Sinai* was a day of clouds, of mist, and of a light rain. He says: *Lord, when Thou didst go forth out of Seʿir, when Thou didst march out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, the heavens also dropped, yea, the clouds dropped water.*[7] This is also what is intended in its dictum: *darkness, cloud, and thick darkness,* and not that He, may He be exalted, was encompassed by *darkness*; for near Him, may He be exalted, there is no darkness, but[8] perpetual, dazzling light the overflow of which illumines all that is dark—in accordance with what is said in the prophetic parables: *And the earth did shine with His glory.*[9]

1. I.e., one of the separate intellects. 2. Ps. 97:2. 3. Ps. 18:12.
4. Exod. 19:9. 5. Deut. 4:11. 6. Literally: it was not without a notion.
7. Judg. 5:4. 8. Or: unless it be. 9. Ezek. 43:2.

CHAPTER 10

Those Mutakallimūn, as I have made known to you, do not imagine nonbeing[1] other than absolute nonbeing; but they do not consider the privations[2] of all the habitus as privations. For they think that every privation and the corresponding habitus – as, for instance, blindness and sight, death and life – have the status of two contraries, like the warm and the cold. For this reason they say in absolute parlance that nonbeing does not need an agent, for only an act calls necessarily for an agent. This is correct from a certain point of view. Though they say that nonbeing does not need an agent, they say, according to their principle, that God makes blind, makes deaf, and causes that which moves to rest. | For these privations are to their mind existent things. It behooves us to let you know our opinion about this, according to what is required by philosophic speculation. Now you know already that what removes an impediment of motion is, from a certain point of view, the mover. Thus in the case of one who removes a pillar from under a piece of wood, whereupon the latter falls down because of its natural weight, we say that he who moved the pillar moved the piece of wood; this is stated in the "Akroasis."[3] In the same way we say of one who removes a certain habitus that he produces the corresponding privation, though that privation is not an existent thing. Just as we say of him who puts out a lamp in the night that he has brought about darkness, we say of one who has destroyed sight that he has made blindness, even though darkness and blindness are privations and do not need an agent. In accord with this interpretation, the dictum of *Isaiah – who forms the light and creates darkness, who makes peace and creates evil*[4] – has become clear. For *darkness* and *evil* are privations. Consider that he does not say, *who makes darkness* and *who makes evil*, for these are not existent things with which the word *making* could be connected. With regard to these two things, he simply uses the expression *who creates*. For this word has a connection with nonbeing[5] in the Hebrew language. Thus it says: *In the beginning God created, and so on;*[6] namely, out of nonbeing. And the relation between privation[7] and the act of an agent is according to the manner that we have stated. It is in this way likewise that you should understand its dictum: *Who hath set man's mouth? Or*

1. *ʿadam*. The term means both "nonbeing" and "privation."
2. *aʿdām*, the plural of the word translated above as "nonbeing."
3. Cf. Aristotle *Physics* viii.4.255b24 ff. 4. Isa. 45:7. 5. Or: privation.
6. Gen. 1:1. 7. Or: nonbeing.

who setteth the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or the blind?[8] However, another interpretation of this dictum is possible; namely, it can be said: who is he that created man as a being endowed with speech, or who creates him as a being lacking speech? In the latter case what would be meant would be the bringing into existence of matter that is not capable of receiving | a certain habitus whatever that habitus may be. For he who brings into existence a certain kind of matter that is incapable of receiving a certain habitus may be said to have made the privation in question; just as one who is able to save an individual from perishing and refrains from saving him may be said to have killed him. It has thus become clear to you that, according to every opinion, the act of an agent can in no way be connected with a privation; the agent can only be said to have produced the privation by accident, as we have explained. On the other hand, that which is produced by an essential act of the agent[9] is necessarily a thing that exists whoever the agent may be, for his act can only be connected with an existent thing.

After this preamble, you should recall that which has been demonstrated with regard to the fact that evils are only evils in relation to something; and that everything that is an evil with reference to one particular existent, that evil is the privation of this thing or of one of the states suitable for it. For this reason the following proposition may be enunciated in an absolute manner: all evils are privations. With respect to a man, for instance, his death is an evil, since death is his nonbeing.[10] Similarly his illness, his poverty, or his ignorance are evils with regard to him, and all of them are privations of habitus. If you pursue all the particular cases falling under the above-mentioned general proposition, you will find that it is never at fault[11] except in the opinion of one who does not distinguish between privation and habitus and between two contraries or one who does not know the natures of all things — one, for instance, who does not know that health is in general a certain equilibrium belonging to the domain of relation and that the privation of this relation generally constitutes illness. With regard to every living thing, death is the privation of form. Similarly with regard to everything that is destroyed among the other existents, its destruction is nothing but the privation of its form.

After these premises, | it will be known with certainty that it may in no way be said of God, may He be cherished and magnified, that He produces

8. Exod. 4:11. 9. Literally: that which the agent does by essence.
10. Or: his privation [of existence]. In this particular instance, the difference between the two meanings of the Arabic word *ʿadam* (cf. n. 1, this chap.) may be of no great importance for the signification of Maimonides' phrase.
11. Literally: never lies.

evil in an essential act; I mean that He, may He be exalted, has a primary intention to produce evil. This cannot be correct. Rather all His acts, may He be exalted, are an absolute[12] good; for He only produces[13] being, and all being is a good. On the other hand, all the evils are privations with which an act is only connected in the way we have explained: namely, through the fact that God has brought matter into existence provided with the nature it has – namely, a nature that consists in matter always being a concomitant of privation, as is known. Hence it is the cause of all passing-away and of all evil. For this reason all the things that were not provided by God with this matter are not subject to passing-away and to being attained by any of the evils. Accordingly the true reality of the act of God in its entirety is the good, for the good is being. For this reason the book that has illumined the darkness of the world has enunciated literally the following statement: *And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.*[14] Even the existence of this inferior matter, whose manner of being it is to be a concomitant of privation entailing death and all evils, all this is also *good* in view of the perpetuity of generation and the permanence of being through succession. For this reason *Rabbi Meir* interpreted the words: *And, behold, it was very* [*me'od*] *good – and, behold, death* [*maveth*] *was good,*[15] according to the notion to which we have drawn attention.

Remember what I have told you in this chapter and understand it. Then everything the prophets and the *Sages* have said will become clear to you regarding the good being in its entirety an essential act of the deity. *Bereshith Rabbah* says literally: *Nothing that is evil descends from above.*[16] |

CHAPTER 11

These great evils that come about between the human individuals who inflict them upon one another because of purposes, desires, opinions, and beliefs, are all of them likewise consequent upon privation. For all of them derive from ignorance, I mean from a privation of knowledge. Just as a blind man, because of absence of sight, does not cease stumbling, being wounded, and also wounding others, because he has nobody to guide him on his way, the various sects of men – every individual according to the extent

12. Literally: pure. 13. Literally: does (or: acts). 14. Gen. 1:31.
15. Genesis Rabbah, IX. 16. Genesis Rabbah, LI.

of his ignorance – does to himself and to others great evils from which individuals of the species suffer. If there were knowledge, whose relation to the human form is like that of the faculty of sight to the eye, they would refrain from doing any harm to themselves and to others. For through cognition of the truth, enmity and hatred are removed and the inflicting of harm by people on one another is abolished. It holds out this promise, saying: *And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and so on. And the cow and the bear shall feed, and so on. And the sucking child shall play, and so on.*[1] Then it gives the reason for this, saying that the cause of the abolition of these enmities, these discords, and these tyrannies, will be the knowledge that men will then have concerning the true reality of the deity. For it says: *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*[2] Know this. |

CHAPTER 12

Often it occurs to the imagination of the multitude that there are more evils in the world than there are good things. As a consequence, this thought is contained in many sermons and poems of all the religious communities,[1] which say that it is surprising if good exists in the temporal, whereas the evils of the temporal are numerous and constant. This error is not found only among the multitude, but also among those who deem that they know something.[2]

Rāzī[3] has written a famous book, which he has entitled "Divine Things." He filled it with the enormity of his ravings and his ignorant notions. Among them there is a notion that he has thought up, namely, that there is more evil than good in what exists; if you compare man's well-being and his pleasures in the time span of his well-being with the pains, the heavy sufferings, the infirmities, the paralytic afflictions, the wretchedness, the

1. Isa. 11:6–8. 2. Isa. 11:9.

1. Or: nations. 2. Or: an individual who deems that he knows something.

3. Maimonides refers here to Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, who died sometime between 923 and 932. Rāzī (the Rhazes of the Latins) was a famous physician and a philosopher who attacked religion based on prophetic revelation. Only fragments of the book mentioned by Maimonides have come down to us. Cf. Translator's Introduction.

sorrows, and the calamities that befall him, you find that his existence – he means the existence of man – is a punishment and a great evil inflicted upon him. He began to establish this opinion by inductively examining these misfortunes, so as to oppose all that is thought by the adherents of the truth regarding the beneficence and manifest munificence of the deity and regarding His being, may He be exalted, the absolute good and regarding all that proceeds from Him being indubitably an absolute good. The reason for this whole mistake lies in the fact that this ignoramus and those like him among the multitude consider that which exists only with reference to a human individual. Every ignoramus imagines that all that exists exists with a view to his individual sake; it is as if there were nothing that exists except him. And if something happens to him that is contrary to what he wishes, he makes the trenchant judgment that | all that exists is an evil. However, if man considered and represented to himself that which exists and knew the smallness of his part in it, the truth would become clear and manifest to him. For this extensive raving entertained by men with regard to the multitude of evils in the world is not said by them to hold good with regard to the angels or with regard to the spheres and the stars or with regard to the elements and the minerals and the plants composed of them or with regard to the various species of animals, but their whole thought only goes out to some individuals belonging to the human species. If someone has eaten bad food and consequently was stricken with leprosy, they are astonished how this great ill has befallen him and how this great evil exists. They are also astonished when one who frequently copulates is stricken blind, and they think it a marvelous thing[4] the calamity of blindness that has befallen such a man and other such calamities.

Now the true way of considering this is that all the existent individuals of the human species and, all the more, those of the other species of the animals are things of no value at all in comparison with the whole that exists and endures. It has made this clear, saying: *Man is like unto vanity, and so on.*[5] *Man, that is a worm; and the son of man, that is a maggot.*[6] *How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, and so on.*[7] *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and so on.*[8] There are also all the other passages figuring in the texts of the books of the prophets concerning this sublime and grave subject, which is most useful in giving man knowledge of his true value, so that he should not make the mistake of thinking that what

4. More or less literally: they think it great. 5. Ps. 144:4. 6. Job 25:6.
7. Job 4:19. 8. Isa. 40:15.

exists is in existence only for the sake of him as an individual. According to us, on the other hand, what exists is in existence because of the will of its Creator; and among the things that are in existence, the species of man is the least in comparison to the superior existents – I refer to the spheres and the stars. As far as comparison with the angels is concerned, there is in true reality no relation[9] between man and them. Man is merely the most noble among the things that are subject to generation, namely, in this our | nether world; I mean to say that he is the noblest thing that is composed of the elements. Withal his existence is for him a great good and a benefit on the part of God because of the properties with which He has singled him out and perfected him. The greater part of the evils that befall its individuals are due to the latter, I mean the deficient individuals of the human species. It is because of our own deficiencies that we lament and we call for aid. We suffer because of evils that we have produced ourselves of our free will; but we attribute them to God, may He be exalted above this; just as He explains in His book, saying: *Is corruption His? No; His children's is the blemish, and so on.*[10] *Solomon* too has explained this, saying: *The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.*[11] The explanation of this lies in the fact that all the evils that befall man fall under one of three species.

The first species of evil is that which befalls man because of the nature of coming-to-be and passing-away, I mean to say because of his being endowed with matter. Because of this, infirmities and paralytic afflictions befall some individuals either in consequence of their original natural disposition, or they supervene because of changes occurring in the elements, such as corruption of the air or a fire from heaven and a landslide. We have already explained that divine wisdom has made it obligatory that there should be no coming-to-be except through passing-away. Were it not for the passing-away of the individuals, the coming-to-be relating to the species would not continue. Thus that pure beneficence, that munificence, that activity causing good to overflow, are made clear. He who wishes to be endowed with flesh and bones and at the same time not be subject to impressions and not to be attained by any of the concomitants of matter merely wishes, without being aware of it, to combine two contraries, namely, to be subject to impressions and not to be subject to them. For if he were not liable to receive impressions, he would not have been generated, and what exists of him would have been one single individual and not a multitude of individuals belonging

9. Or: proportion. 10. Deut. 32:5. 11. Prov. 19:3.

to one species.[12] Galen has put it well in the third of the book of "Utilities,"[13] saying: Do not set | your mind on the vain thought that it is possible that out of menstrual blood and sperm there should be generated a living being that does not die, is not subject to pain, is in perpetual motion, or is as brilliant as the sun. This dictum of Galen draws attention to one particular case falling under a general proposition. That proposition is as follows: Everything that is capable of being generated from any matter whatever, is generated in the most perfect way in which it is possible to be generated out of that specific matter; the deficiency attaining the individuals of the species corresponds to the deficiency of the particular matter of the individual. Now the ultimate term and the most perfect thing that may be generated out of blood and sperm is the human species with its well-known nature consisting in man's being a living, rational,[14] and mortal being. Thus this species of evils must necessarily exist. Withal you will find that the evils of this kind that befall men are very few and occur only seldom. For you will find cities, existing for thousands of years, that have never been flooded or burned. Also thousands of people are born in perfect health whereas the birth of an infirm human being is an anomaly, or at least—if someone objects to the word anomaly and does not use it—such an individual is very rare; for they do not form a hundredth or even a thousandth part of those born in good health.

The evils of the second kind are those that men inflict upon one another, such as tyrannical domination of some of them over others. These evils are more numerous than those belonging to the first kind, and the reasons for that are numerous and well known. The evils in question also come from us. However, the wronged man has no device against them. At the same time, there is no city existing anywhere in the whole world in which evil of this kind is in any way widespread and predominant[15] among the inhabitants of that city; but its existence is also rare—in the cases, for instance, when one individual surprises | another individual and kills him or robs him by night. This kind of evil becomes common, reaching many people, only in the course of great wars; and such events too do not form the majority of occurrences upon the earth taken as a whole.

12. As Munk has seen, Maimonides here wishes to express the thought that if man were not subject to impressions and were not generated, there would be only a single individual in the human species. This is the case with the heavenly spheres; the body and soul of each of them constitute one individual, the sole one of its species.
13. I.e., *De usu partium humani corporis*. The passage quoted is to be found in Book III, chap. 10 (ed. Kuhn, III, 238). The translation is accurate.
14. Or: capable of speech.
15. More or less literally: belongs to the majority of what happens.

The evils of the third kind are those that are inflicted upon any individual among us by his own action; this is what happens in the majority of cases, and these evils are much more numerous than those of the second kind. All men lament over evils of this kind; and it is only seldom that you find one who is not guilty of having brought them upon himself. He who is reached by them deserves truly to be blamed. To him one may say what has been said: *This hath been to you of your own doing.*[16] It has also been said: *He doeth it that would destroy his own soul.*[17] *Solomon* has said about evils of this kind: *The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and so on.*[18] He also has explained with reference to evils of this kind that they are done by man to himself; his dictum being: *Behold, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many thoughts;*[19] these thoughts are those that have been vanquished by these evils. About this kind it has also been said: *For affliction cometh not forth from the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.*[20] Immediately afterwards it is explained that this sort of evil is brought into existence by man, for it is said: *For man is born unto trouble, and so on.*[21] This kind is consequent upon all vices, I mean concupiscence for eating, drinking, and copulation, and doing these things with excess in regard to quantity or irregularly or when the quality of the foodstuffs is bad. For this is the cause of all corporeal and psychical diseases and ailments. With regard to the diseases of the body, this is manifest. With regard to the diseases of the soul due to this evil regimen, they arise in two ways: | In the first place, through the alteration necessarily affecting the soul in consequence of the alteration of the body, the soul being a corporeal faculty—it having already been said that the moral qualities of the soul are consequent upon the temperament of the body. And in the second place, because of the fact that the soul becomes familiarized with, and accustomed to, unnecessary things and consequently acquires the habit of desiring things that are unnecessary either for the preservation of the individual or for the preservation of the species; and this desire is something infinite. For whereas all necessary things are restricted and limited, that which is superfluous is unlimited. If, for instance, your desire is directed to having silver plate, it would be better if it were of gold; some have crystal plate; and perhaps plate is procured that is made out of emeralds and rubies, whenever these stones are to be found. Thus every ignoramus who thinks worthless thoughts is always sad and despondent because he is not able to achieve the luxury attained by someone else. In most cases such a man exposes himself to great

16. Mal. 1:9. The words *to you* do not occur in this verse of the Bible. 17. Prov. 6:32. 18. Prov. 19:3. 19. Eccles. 7:29. 20. Job 5:6. 21. Job 5:7.

dangers, such as arise in sea voyages and the service of kings; his aim therein being to obtain these unnecessary luxuries. When, however, he is stricken by misfortunes in these courses he has pursued, he complains about God's decree and predestination and begins to put the blame on the temporal and to be astonished at the latter's injustice in not helping him to obtain great wealth, which would permit him to procure a great deal of wine so as always to be drunk and a number of concubines adorned with gold and precious stones of various kinds so as to move him to copulate more than he is able so as to experience pleasure – as if the end of existence consisted merely in the pleasure of such an ignoble man. The error of the multitude has arrived at the point where they impute to the Creator deficiency of power because of His having produced that which exists and endowed it with a nature entailing, | according to their imagination, these great evils; inasmuch as this nature does not help every vicious man to achieve the satisfaction of his vice so that his corrupt soul should reach the term of its demand, which, according to what we have explained, has no limit. On the other hand, men of excellence and knowledge have grasped and understood the wisdom manifested in that which exists, as *David* has set forth, saying: *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.*[22] By this he says that those who keep to the nature of that which exists, keep the commandments of the Law, and know the ends of both, apprehend clearly the excellency and the true reality of the whole. For this reason they take as their end that for which they were intended as men, namely, apprehension. And because of the necessity of the body, they seek what is necessary for it, *bread to eat, and raiment to put on,*[23] without any luxury. If one restricts oneself to what is necessary, this is the easiest of things and may be obtained with a very small effort. Whatever in it that is seen as difficult and hard for us is due to the following reason: when one endeavors to seek what is unnecessary, it becomes difficult to find even what is necessary. For the more frequently hopes cling to the superfluous, the more onerous does the matter become; forces and revenues are spent for what is unnecessary and that which is necessary is not found. You ought to consider the circumstances in which we are placed with regard to its being found.[24] For the more a thing is necessary for a living being, the more often it may be found and the cheaper it is. On the other hand, the less necessary it is, the less often it is found and it is very expensive. Thus, for instance, the necessary for man is air, water, and food. But air is the most necessary, for

22. Ps. 25:10. 23. Gen. 28:20.
24. The expression translated "being found" also means "existence."

nobody can be without it for a moment without perishing. As for water, one can remain without it for a day or two. Accordingly air is indubitably easier to find and cheaper than water. | Water is more necessary than food, for certain people may remain, if they drink and do not eat, for four or five days without food. Accordingly in every city you find water more frequently and at a cheaper price than food. Things are similar with regard to foodstuffs; those that are most necessary are easier to find at a given place and cheaper than the unnecessary. Regarding musk, amber, rubies, and emeralds, I do not think that anyone of sound intellect can believe that man has strong need for them unless it be for medical treatment; and even in such cases, they and other similar things can be replaced by numerous herbs and earths.

This is a manifestation of the beneficence and munificence of God, may He be exalted, shown even with regard to this weak living creature. Regarding manifestations of His justice, may He be exalted, and of the equality established by Him between them, they are very evident. For within the domain of natural generation and corruption, there is no case in which an individual animal belonging to any species whatever of animals is distinguished from another individual of the same species by having a special faculty possessed only by him or by having an additional part of the body. For all natural, psychic, and animal faculties and all the parts that are found in one particular individual are also found, as far as essence is concerned, in another—even though there be accidentally a deficiency because of something that has supervened and that is not according to nature. But this is rare, as we have made clear. There in no way exists a relation of superiority and inferiority between individuals conforming to the course of nature except that which follows necessarily from the differences in the disposition of the various kinds of matter; this being necessary on account of the nature of the matter of the particular species and not specially intended for one individual rather than another. As for the fact that one individual possesses many sachets and clothes adorned with gold whereas another lacks these superfluities of life, there is no injustice and no inequity in this. | He who has obtained these luxuries has not gained thereby an increment in his substance. He has only obtained a false imagining or a plaything. And he who lacks the superfluities of life is not necessarily deficient. *And he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.*[25] This is what happens for the most part at

25. Exod. 16:18.

every time and at every place. And, as we have made clear, no attention should be paid to anomalies.

Through the two considerations that have been set forth, His beneficence, may He be exalted, with regard to His creatures will become clear to you, in that He brings into existence what is necessary according to its order of importance and in that He makes individuals of the same species equal at their creation. With a view to this true consideration, the Master of those who know[26] says: *For all His ways are judgment.*[27] And *David* says: *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, and so on,*[28] as we have made clear. *David* also says explicitly: *The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works.*[29] For His bringing us into existence is absolutely the great good, as we have made clear, and the creation of the governing faculty in the living beings is an indication of His mercifulness with regard to them, as we have made clear.

CHAPTER 13

Often the minds of perfect men have grown perplexed over the question of what is the final end of that which exists. Now I will explain that in all schools this question is abolished. I say then that in the case of every agent who acts with a purpose, the thing he has done must necessarily have some end with a view to which it has been done. According to philosophic speculation, this is clear and is not in need of demonstration. It is also clear that a thing that has been done in this way with a purpose must have been produced in time after | not having existed. Among the things that are clear also belongs the fact, and this fact universally admitted, that He whose existence is necessary, who has never and will never be nonexistent, does not need an agent, as we have already made clear.[1] And as He has not been made,[2] no question as to the final end arises with reference to Him. For this reason, one does not ask: What is the final end of the existence of the Creator, may He be exalted?; for He is not a created thing. Through these premises it has become clear that a final end can only be sought with regard to all things produced in time that have been made through the purpose of an intelligent being. I mean to say that with regard to that which has its begin-

26. I.e., Moses. 27. Deut. 32:4. 28. Ps. 25:10. 29. Ps. 145:9.
1. Cf. II Introduction, 20th premise. 2. By an agent.

ning in an intellect,[3] one necessarily must seek to find out what its final cause is. On the other hand, one must not, as we have said, seek the final end of what has not been produced in time. After this preamble, you should know that the final end of all that exists ought not to be sought – neither according to our opinion who assert that the world has been produced in time nor according to the opinion of Aristotle who holds that the world is eternal. For according to his opinion as to the eternity of the world, no ultimate end should be sought for any part of the world. For according to his opinion, it is not permitted to ask: What is the final end of the existence of the heavens, and why have they such and such dimensions and such and such numbers? or: Why is matter as it is? or: What is the final end of this particular species of animals or of plants? For all things derive, according to him, from an eternal necessity that has never ceased and will never cease. Though natural science seeks to find out the final end of every natural being, that end is not the ultimate end of which we treat in this chapter. For it is manifest, according to natural science, that every natural existent must necessarily have a final end; but that final cause, which is the noblest among the four causes, is hidden as far as the majority of species are concerned. Aristotle constantly states in an explicit way that nature does nothing | in vain, meaning thereby that every natural act has a certain final end. Aristotle also states in express terms that the plants have been created for the sake of the animals.[4] Similarly he explains with regard to certain beings that some exist for the sake of others; he does this in particular with regard to the limbs of animals.[5]

Know that the existence of this final end in natural things has of necessity led the philosophers to a belief in a principle other than nature; namely, the one that Aristotle calls the intellectual or divine principle, that being the one that makes one thing for the sake of another. Know too that to the mind of an equitable man, one of the strongest proofs for the production of the world in time is the fact, demonstrated with reference to natural beings, that every one of these has a certain final end, some of them existing for the sake of others; for this is a proof of purpose on the part of a being possessing purpose. And purpose can only be conceived with reference to the production in time of something so produced.

I shall return to the subject of this chapter, namely, to the discussion of final end. I say then: Aristotle has made it clear that in natural things the

3. More or less literally: that which has an intellectual beginning (or: principle).
4. Cf. Aristotle *Politics* i.8.1256b16; *Plants* i.2.817b25.
5. Cf. Aristotle *De partibus animalium* i.5.645b14.

agent,[6] the form, and the final end, are one and the same thing; I mean to say that they are one and the same thing in species. For, to take an example, the form of Zayd is the agent producing the form of the individual ʿUmar, who is his son; the thing it does is to give to ʿUmar's matter a form pertaining to its species, the final end of ʿUmar consisting in his having a human form. According to him, this is the case with regard to all individuals belonging to natural species, which are in need of reproduction; for in these, the three causes[7] belong to one species. However, all of this refers but to the first finality.[8] Regarding the ultimate finality of every species, all those who discourse on nature deem that it is indispensable, but that it is very difficult to know; all the more is this so of the finality of what exists as a whole. What appears to result from the discourse of Aristotle is that, | according to him, the ultimate finality of these species consists in the permanence of coming-to-be and passing-away, which is[9] indispensable for the continuance of coming-to-be in this inferior matter, since it is impossible that the individuals composed out of it should endure. Still, the end that can be generated, I mean the most perfect thing that is possible, is generated from it. For the ultimate purpose consists in bringing about perfection. And it is manifest that the most perfect thing, whose existence out of this matter is possible, is man; he is the last and the most perfect of these compounds. Accordingly even if it is said that all sublunar beings exist for his sake,[10] that would be true from this point of view; I mean because the movement of changeable things exists for the sake of coming-to-be in order that what is as perfect as it is possible to be should come about. Aristotle ought not to be asked concerning the finality of man's existence, seeing that he holds the doctrine affirming the eternity of the world. For, according to him, the first finality for every individual produced in time consists in the perfection of the form of the species. Consequently every individual in whom the acts necessarily deriving from that form are perfected, has achieved its finality perfectly and completely. The ultimate finality of the species is the permanence of this form through the continuance of generation and corruption so that there should always be a new process of generation in which the greatest possible perfection is sought. It is accordingly clear that, according to the doctrine of eternity, the question of ultimate finality for being as a whole does not arise.

On the other hand, it is sometimes thought that, according to our opinion and our doctrine of the production in time of the world as a whole

6. I.e., the efficient cause. 7. I.e., the efficient, formal, and final causes.
8. *ghāyʿa*. This word has been translated "final end" in the preceding part of this chapter.
9. According to Ibn Tibbon's version: which are. 10. I.e., for man's sake.

after nonexistence, this question is obligatory – I mean that it is obligatory to seek out the finality of all that exists. It is likewise thought that the finality of all that exists is solely the existence of the human species so that it should worship God, and that all that has been made has been made for it alone so that even the heavenly spheres only revolve in order to be useful to it and to bring into existence | that which is necessary for it. Some passages in the books of the prophets, if taken according to their external sense, give strong support to this thought. Thus: *He formed it to be inhabited;*[11] *If My covenant had not been with day and night, I would not have appointed the statutes of heaven and earth;*[12] *And spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.*[13] Now if the spheres exist for the sake of man, all the more is this the case for all the species of animals and of plants. However, if this opinion is carefully examined, as opinions ought to be carefully examined by intelligent men, the flaw in it becomes clear. This result is achieved through posing to him who believes this opinion the following question: The final end being the existence of man, is the Creator able to bring him into existence without all these preliminaries, or was it possible for him to be brought into existence only after they were carried out? If someone answers that this is possible and that, for instance, God was able to bring man into existence without there being a heaven, the following question may be posed. What is the utility for him[14] of all these things, which are in themselves not the final end, but exist for the sake of a thing that could have existed without all of them? Even if the universe[15] exists for the sake of man, and the final end of man is, as has been said, to worship God, a question remains to be asked regarding the final end of his worship. For He, may He be exalted, would not acquire greater perfection if He were worshipped by all that He has created and were truly apprehended by them, nor would He be attained by a deficiency if nothing whatever existed except Him. If the answer is given that this is not with a view to His perfection, but to our perfection, for that is the most excellent thing for us – namely, our perfection – the same question follows necessarily: namely, what is the final end of our existence with that perfection? Necessarily and obligatorily the

11. Isa. 45:18.
12. Jer. 33:25. This explanation of the verse, which Maimonides evidently had in mind, is suggested in B.T., Pesaḥim, 68b, and is referred to in Rashi's commentary; however, the latter remarks that it does not fit in with the rest of the passage. The probable translation of the quoted portion of the verse is that given in the English Bible: *If My covenant be not with day and night, if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth.*
13. Isa. 40:22. 14. Probably God is referred to here. 15. Literally: the all.

argument must end with the answer being given that the final end is: God has wished it so, or: His wisdom has required this to be so. And this is the correct answer. Accordingly you will find that the *Sages of Israel* have inserted into the text of their prayers:[16] *Thou hast set man apart from the beginning and acknowledged him | that he should stand before Thee. Yet who shall say unto Thee, What dost Thou? and if he be righteous, what boon is this to Thee?* Thus they have explicitly stated that there does not exist a final end, but only the Will alone.[17] Now this being so and, in addition, given the belief in the production of the world in time – thus making it indispensable for us to say that what exists, its causes, and its effects, could be different from what they are – an incongruity follows necessarily with reference to the existence of everything brought into existence except man. It follows, namely, that all the beings in question have been brought into existence without any final end at all, inasmuch as the only purposed final end, namely, man, could have existed without all of them.

For this reason, to my mind, the correct view according to the beliefs of the Law – a view that corresponds likewise to the speculative views – is as follows: It should not be believed that all the beings exist for the sake of the existence of man. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes and not for the sake of something else. Thus even according to our view holding that the world has been produced in time, the quest for the final end of all the species of beings collapses. For we say that in virtue of His will He has brought into existence all the parts of the world, some of which have been intended for their own sakes, whereas others have been intended for the sake of some other thing that is intended for its own sake. Just as He has willed that the human species should come to exist, He also has willed that the spheres and their stars should come to exist; and He also has willed that the angels should come to exist. In respect to every being He intended that being itself; and whenever the existence of some thing was impossible unless it was preceded by some other thing, He first brought that thing into existence – as in the case of the senses, which precede reason.

This view too has been expressed in the prophetic books. Thus it says: *The Lord hath made everything lamaʿanehu* [*for His sake* or *for its sake*],[18] where the third person[19] may refer to the complement.[20] If, however, it refers to the subject, the interpretation of the word[21] would be: for the sake

16. The following passage is in the prayer called *Neʿilah*, recited on the Day of Atonement.
17. Or: except the Will alone. 18. Prov. 16:4. 19. I.e., *His* or *its*.
20. I.e., to *everything*. 21. Of *lamaʿanehu*.

of His essence, may He be exalted – that is, | for the sake of His will, as the latter is His essence, according to what has been made clear in this Treatise.[22] We have already explained that His essence is also called *His glory*, as in its saying: *Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory.*[23] Thus his saying here, *The Lord hath made everything lamaʿanehu* [*for His sake*], would be like saying: *Everyone that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, I have formed him, yea, I have made him.*[24] It says that everything whose making is ascribed to Me,[25] has been made by Me solely because of My will. The expression, *I have formed him, yea, I have made him*, refers to what I have explained to you, namely, to the fact that there are beings whose existence is only possible after that of something else. Thus He might say: I have created that first thing, as for instance matter, which must indispensably have come prior to everything material. Then I made in that thing which came first or after it that which I intended to bring into existence, without there being anything[26] except will alone.

If you consider that book which guides all those who seek guidance toward what is correct and therefore is called *Torah*,[27] the notion that we have in view will become manifest to you from the commencement of the *Account of the Beginning*[28] till the end. For with reference to none of them[29] is the statement made in any way that it exists for the sake of some other thing. He only says that He brought every part of the world into existence and that its existence conformed to its purpose. This is the meaning of his saying: *And God saw that it was good* [*tob*].[30] For you know what we have explained with regard to their saying: *The Torah speaketh in the language of the sons of man.*[31] And *good* [*tob*] is an expression applied by us to what conforms to our purpose. About the whole,[32] it says: *And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good* [*tob meʾod*].[33] For the production in time of everything that was produced conformed to its purpose, and nothing went wrong. And that is the meaning of the expression: *very* [*meʾod*]; for sometimes a thing is *good* and conforms for a time to our purpose, whereas afterwards the goal is missed. Accordingly it gives the information that all the things made, conformed to | His intention and purpose

22. Cf. I 53. 23. Exod. 33:18. Cf. I 64. 24. Isa. 43:7.
25. Certain manuscripts have a text that may be translated: everything that may be ascribed to My action. Ibn Tibbon's translation conforms to the one given in this note.
26. In the way of finality.
27. The word derives from the verb *horoth* (to show the way).
28. I.e., the story of the Creation. 29. I.e., of the things created. 30. Cf. Gen. 1.
31. B.T., Yebamoth, 71a; B.T., Baba Meṣiʿa, 31b. Cf. I 26.
32. The whole work of Creation. 33. Gen. 1:31.

and that they continued without ceasing to correspond to what was intended with regard to them. Be not misled by its saying with regard to the stars, *To give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night*,[34] so that you think that it means: in order that they should do this.[35] It is merely information about their nature, which He willed to create thus — I mean to say, giving light and ruling. Similarly it says of *man*, *And have dominion over the fish of the sea, and so on*,[36] which dictum does not mean that man was created for the sake of this, but merely gives information about man's nature with which He, may He be exalted, has stamped him. As for its saying with regard to the plants[37] — namely, that they are given over to the Adamites and the other animals — Aristotle[38] and others have made explicit statements about this; and it is manifest that plants were brought into existence only for the sake of the animals, for these must of necessity be nourished. However, this does not apply to the stars; I mean to say that they do not exist for our sake and so that good should come to us from them. For, as we have made clear, its dictum, *to give light and to rule*, merely gives information about the utility of what comes from them and overflows toward that which is below, according to what I have made clear to you concerning the nature of the constant overflow of the good from one thing toward another. As far as what is reached by the good that is always coming is concerned, it may seem that what receives the benefit is the final end of the thing that caused its good and its liberality to overflow toward it. Thus an individual from among the people of a city might think that the final end of the ruler consists in safeguarding his[39] house at night against robbers. And this is true from a certain point of view. For since his house is safeguarded and this benefit comes to him because of the ruler, the matter looks as if the final end of the ruler were the safeguarding of the house of that individual. We must interpret in this sense every text whose external sense we find indicates that something sublime has been made for the sake of something inferior to it; this text means that this act follows necessarily from the nature of the sublime.

Thus we are obliged | to believe that all that exists was intended by Him, may He be exalted, according to His volition. And we shall seek for it no cause or other final end whatever. Just as we do not seek for the end of His existence, may He be exalted, so do we not seek for the final end of His

34. Gen. 1:17–18.
35. I.e., that the stars were created in order to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night.
36. Gen. 1:28. 37. Cf. Gen. 1:29. 38. Cf. above in this chapter.
39. I.e., the individual's.

volition, according to which all that has been and will be produced in time comes into being as it is. Hence be not misled in your soul to think that the spheres and the angels have been brought into existence for our sake. For it has explained to us what we are worth: *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket.*[40] Consider accordingly your substance and that of the spheres, the stars, and the separate intellects; then the truth will become manifest to you, and you will know that man and nothing else is the most perfect and the most noble thing that has been generated from this [inferior] matter; but that if his being is compared to that of the spheres and all the more to that of the separate beings, it is very, very contemptible. Accordingly it says: *Behold, He putteth no trust in His servants, and His angels He chargeth with deficiency* [*tahalah*]. *How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust!*[41] Know that *His servants* that are referred to in this *verse* do not belong at all to the human species; this is proven by its saying: *How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay whose foundation is in the dust!* But *His servants* mentioned in this *verse* are the angels. Similarly also, *His angels* referred to in this *verse* are indubitably the spheres. The same notion is made clear and repeated by *Eliphaz* himself in different terms and in another text, saying: *Behold, He putteth no trust in His holy ones; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much less one that is abominable and impure, man* [*ish*] *who drinketh iniquity* [*ʿavlah*] *like water!*[42]

Thus it is made clear that *His holy ones* are identical with *His servants* and that they do not belong to the human species. *His angels*, which are referred to in this *verse*, are the *heavens*. And the word *deficiency* [*tahalah*] means the same thing as *are not clean in His sight*. I refer to their being endowed with matter. And though they have | the purest and most luminous matter, it is – if compared to the separate intellects – obscure, dark, and not clear. As for its saying regarding the angels, *Behold, He putteth no trust in His servants*, it means that they have no trustworthy existence. For, according to our opinion, they are made; according to the opinion of those who profess the doctrine of the eternity of the world, they are caused. And their part in existence is not trustworthy or fixed if compared with Him, may He be exalted, the absolutely necessary being. The words, *How much less one that is abominable and impure*, correspond to the words, *How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay*. It is as if it said: *How much less one that is*

40. Isa. 40:15. 41. Job 4:18–19. 42. Job 15:15–16.

abominable and impure, the human being [*ha-adam*] with whom obliquity[43] is mingled, spread, as it is, through all his members. I mean to say that privation is his concomitant. *ʿAvlah* means iniquity: *In the land of uprightness will he deal iniquitously* [*yeʿavvel*].[44] Its saying *ish* [*man*][45] is like its saying *adam* [*human being*]; for sometimes the human species is called *ish* [*man*]: *He that smiteth a man* [*ish*], *so that he dieth.*[46]

This is what one ought to believe. For when man knows his own soul, makes no mistakes with regard to it, and understands every being according to what it is, he becomes calm and his thoughts are not troubled by seeking a final end for what has not that final end; or by seeking any final end for what has no final end except its own existence, which depends on the divine will—if you prefer you can also say: on the divine wisdom.

CHAPTER 14

What man ought also to consider in order to know what his own soul is worth and to make no mistake regarding this point, is what has been made clear concerning the dimensions of the spheres and of the stars and the measures of the distances separating us from them. For | the measures of all the distances with reference to half the diameter of the earth having been made clear and the dimensions of the diameter of the earth and consequently those of its half diameter being known, all the distances are known. Accordingly it has been demonstrated that the distance between the center of the earth and the highest part of the sphere of Saturn is one that could be covered in approximately eight thousand and seven hundred years of three hundred sixty-five days each, if each day a distance is covered of forty of our legal miles, of which each has two thousand of the cubits used for working purposes. Consider this great and terrifying distance. It conforms to what is said: *Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the topmost of the stars, how high they are!*[1] This means: can you not draw from the height of heaven a conclusion as to the remoteness of the apprehension of the deity? For if we are at such an extreme remoteness from that body,

43. "Obliquity" is the literal translation of the Arabic term used by Maimonides. Obviously the figurative meaning "moral iniquity" is intended.
44. Isa. 26:10. 45. Cf. Job 15:16. 46. Exod. 21:12.
1. Job 22:12.

which in point of place is so far away from us, so that its substance and most of its actions are hidden from us, this applies all the more to the apprehension of its maker, who is not a body. This great distance that has been demonstrated is only a minimum. It is not possible that the distance between the center of the earth and the concavity of the sphere of the fixed stars should be less than that measure, but it is possible that it be many times greater. For the thickness of the bodies of the spheres has only been demonstrated with respect to its minimum possible dimensions, as is made clear in the Epistles concerning distances. Similarly it is impossible to determine exactly the thickness of the bodies that, according to Thābit,[2] reasoning forces us to admit between every two spheres. For in these bodies there are no stars from which an inference can be drawn. As for the sphere of the fixed stars, its minimum thickness is equal to the distance that can be covered in | four years. This is known from the measure of some[3] of its stars, the body of each of these stars being ninety-odd times as great as that of the terrestrial globe. It is, however, possible that the thickness of their body[4] is even greater. As for the ninth sphere, which causes the universe[5] to accomplish the diurnal motion, its dimension is not known at all; for no star is to be found in it, and consequently we have no device enabling us to know its size. Consider how vast are the dimensions and how great the number of these corporeal beings. If the whole of the earth would not constitute even the smallest part of the sphere of the fixed stars, what is the relation of the human species to all these created things, and how can one of us imagine that they exist for his sake and because of him and that they are instruments for his benefit?

This is the state of things when the bodies are compared. How then would things look if you consider the existence of the intellects? Sometimes doubts are expressed concerning the opinion of the philosophers in this matter. It is said: If we claimed that the final end of the spheres consists in the governance of, for instance, a human individual or of several individuals, this would be impossible according to philosophic speculation. However inasmuch as we think that their final end consists in the governance of the human species, there is no absurdity in thinking that the final end of these great individual bodies is the existence of the individuals of the various

2. Thābit Ibn Qurra. Cf. II 24, n. 4.
3. According to certain manuscripts: of the distance. This is a reading adopted by Ibn Tibbon, Alḥarizi, and Ibn Falquera.
4. Literally: its body. It seems more probable that the body of the stars, and not, as Munk would have it, the body of the sphere, is meant.
5. Literally: the all.

species, the number of which individuals cannot – according to their doctrine – ever have an end. This would resemble the case of the artisan who has iron tools weighing one hundred-weight in order to manufacture a small needle weighing one grain. If this were done for the sake of one needle, this would have been bad management from the point of view of a certain speculation, even though not in an absolute sense. But in view of the fact that with the help of these heavy tools he manufactures one needle after another | and thus several hundred-weights of needles, the making of these tools is in all respects an act of wisdom and of good management. Similarly the final end of the spheres consists in the continuance of coming-to-be and passing-away; and the final end of coming-to-be and passing-away consists, as has already been said, in the existence of the human species. We can find texts and traditions that support this imagining.

However, the philosopher will resolve the doubt by saying: If the difference between the bodies of the spheres and the individuals belonging to the species subject to generation and corruption had only consisted in their respective bigness and smallness, this objection would be possible. However, seeing the difference there is between them concerning the nobleness of substance, it would have been most disgraceful if what is nobler served as an instrument for the existence of what is most base and vile.

To sum up: This doubt may be called upon to help us in our belief concerning the production of the world in time, which notion was my main object in this chapter. Besides there is the fact that I have always heard from all those who had some smattering of the science of astronomy, that what the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, have said regarding distances[6] was exaggerated. For they have clearly stated that the thickness of every sphere equals a distance that can be covered in five hundred years and that the distance between every two spheres can only be covered in five hundred years.[7] There are seven spheres in all;[8] consequently the distance of the seventh sphere, I mean its convex part, from the center of the earth can only be covered in seven thousand years. Whoever hears this must imagine that in these words there is great exaggeration and that the distance does not reach this measure. However, from what has been demonstrated with regard to distances, it has become clear to you that the distance between the center of the earth and the lower part of the sphere of Saturn, which is the seventh sphere, can only be covered in approximately seven thousand and twenty-four years. As for the distance mentioned by us, which can only be

6. I.e., the astronomical distances.
7. Cf. J.T., Berakhoth, 1a.
8. According to the talmudic Sages.

covered in eight thousand seven hundred years, it | goes up to the concavity of the eighth sphere. When you find that [the Sages] say that between every two spheres there is such and such a distance, this refers to the thickness of the body found between the spheres and does not mean that there is a vacuum there.

Do not ask of me to show that everything they have said concerning astronomical matters conforms to the way things really are. For at that time mathematics were imperfect. They did not speak about this as transmitters of dicta of the prophets, but rather because in those times they were men of knowledge in these fields or because they had heard these dicta from the men of knowledge who lived in those times. Because of this I will not say with regard to dicta of theirs, which, as we find, corresponds to the truth, that they are incorrect or have been said fortuitously. For whenever it is possible to interpret the words of an individual in such a manner that they conform to a being whose existence has been demonstrated, this is the conduct that is most fitting and most suitable for an equitable man of excellent nature.

CHAPTER 15

The impossible has a stable nature, one whose stability is constant and is not made by a maker; it is impossible to change it in any way. Hence the power over the maker of the impossible is not attributed to the deity. This is a point about which none of the men of speculation differs in any way. And none but those who do not understand the intelligibles, is ignorant of this. The point about which there is difference of opinion among all the men of speculation concerns a certain species of imaginable things, with regard to which one[1] of the men of speculation says that they belong to the class of impossible things regarding which that power to change them cannot be attributed to the deity, whereas another says that | it belongs to the class of possible things depending on the power of the deity to be brought into existence when He wills. Thus, for example, the coming together of contraries at the same instant and at the same place and the transmutation of substances, I mean the transformation of a substance into an accident and of an accident into a substance, or the existence of a corporeal substance without

1. Or: some.

there being an accident in it – all of these things belong to the class of the impossible according to all men of speculation. Likewise that God should bring into existence someone like Himself, or should annihilate Himself, or should become a body, or should change – all of these things belong to the class of the impossible; and the power to do any of these things cannot be attributed to God. Regarding the question whether He is able to bring into existence an accident that exists alone, not in a substance, a group among the men of speculation, namely, the Muʿtazila, have imagined this and held that it was possible, whereas others have asserted that it was impossible. It is true that those who assert that an accident may exist without a substratum are not led to this affirmation by speculation alone, but wished to safeguard thereby certain doctrines[2] of the Law that are violently rebutted by speculation; thus the assertion in question was a way out for them. Similarly the bringing into being of a corporeal thing out of no matter whatever, belongs – according to us – to the class of the possible, and to the class of the impossible – according to the philosophers. The philosophers say similarly that to bring into being a square whose diagonal is equal to one of its sides or a corporeal angle encompassed by four plane right angles and other similar things belong all of them to the class of the impossible; and some of those who are ignorant of mathematics and, concerning these matters, know only the words by themselves and do not conceive their notion, think that they are possible.

Would that I knew whether this gate is open and licit, so that everyone can claim and assert with regard to any notion whatever that he conceives: This is possible; whereas someone else says: No, this is impossible because of the nature of the matter. Or is there something that shuts and blocks this gate so that | a man can assert decisively that such and such a thing is impossible because of its nature? Should this be verified and examined with the help of the imaginative faculty or with the intellect? And by what can one differentiate between that which is imagined and that which is cognized by the intellect? For an individual sometimes disagrees with someone else or with himself with regard to a thing that in his opinion is possible, so that he asserts that by its nature it is possible; whereas the objector says: This assertion that it is possible is the work of the imagination and not due to consideration by the intellect. Is there accordingly something that permits differentiation between the imaginative faculty and the intellect? And is that thing something altogether outside both the intellect and the imagination, or is it by the intellect itself that one distinguishes between that which is

2. Literally: matters.

cognized by the intellect and that which is imagined? All these are points for investigation, which may lead very far. However, this is not the object of this chapter.

It has then become clear that, according to every opinion and school, there are impossible things whose existence cannot be admitted. Power to bring them about cannot be ascribed to the deity. The fact that He does not change them signifies neither inability nor deficiency of power on His part. Accordingly they are necessarily as they are and are not due to the act of an agent. It has then become clear that the point with regard to which there is disagreement concerns the things that could be supposed to belong to either of the two classes – whether they belong to the class of the possible or to the class of the impossible. Learn this.

CHAPTER 16

An aberrant opinion is professed by the philosophers concerning God, may He be exalted, with respect to His knowledge of what is other than He; and it is a very great aberration, and they have stumbled in such a way that neither they nor those who follow them with regard to this opinion can find absolution. I shall let you hear the difficulties through which they were plunged into aberrant opinion. | I shall also let you hear the opinion of our Law about this and our opposition to them in regard to their evil and incongruous opinions concerning God's knowledge.

That which in the first place was mainly responsible for plunging them into, and impelling them toward, this opinion is what appears at first sight to be a lack of order in the circumstances of the human individuals and the fact that among the Adamites some excellent individuals are in a sorry and grievous plight whereas some wicked individuals are in good and pleasurable circumstances. This impelled them to formulate the division that you will now hear. They said: One of two things must be true: God either knows nothing about these individual circumstances and does not comprehend them, or He knows and apprehends them. This is a necessary division. Thereupon they said: If He apprehends and knows them, one of three things must be true: either He orders them, settling them according to the best, the most perfect, and the most accomplished order; or He is incapable of establishing order in them and has no power over them; or again He knows

and is able to establish excellent order and governance, but neglects to do it in consequence of His disdain and contempt or in consequence of His jealousy – just as we find among human beings a man who is able to procure a benefit for another individual and who is aware of the latter's need to obtain this benefit from him, but who out of his ill-nature, his wickedness, and his jealousy, begrudges him this benefit and hence does not procure it. This division is likewise necessary and correct. I mean to say that everyone who knows a certain matter must necessarily either exercise care in the governance of what he knows, or neglect it – as a man, for instance, neglects the governance of the cats in his house or of even more contemptible beings; | again sometimes he who exercises care with regard to some matter may be incapable of governing it, though willing to do so. After they had established this division, they decided categorically that two of the three cases – one of which must necessarily be valid with regard to everyone that knows – are impossible with respect to God, may He be exalted; namely, the case in which He would have no power or the case in which He would have power, but not care for the things He knew. For this would create in Him evil or incapacity, and He is exalted above these two things. Thus in the whole division only the following cases remain: either He knows nothing at all of these circumstances, or He knows them and establishes in them the most excellent order. But we at any rate find that they are without order, do not observe analogies, and have no continuity such as they ought to have. Consequently this is a proof that He does not know these circumstances in any way or through any cause whatever. This is what has plunged them at first into this very aberrant opinion. You will find that all that I have summarized for you concerning their divisions and the point I made calling attention to the fact that this is where they erred are clearly set forth in Alexander of Aphrodisias' treatise "On Governance."[1]

See and marvel how they plunged into something worse than that which they tried to avoid and how they were ignorant of a matter to which they were constantly drawing our attention and that they were always explaining to us. As for their plunging into something worse than that which they tried to avoid, it consisted in the fact that in trying to avoid imputing negligence to God, they decided that He is ignorant and that everything that is in this lowly world is hidden from Him, and He does not apprehend it. As for their being ignorant of that to which they were constantly drawing our attention, it consists in their considering what exists from the point of

1. *Fi'l-tadbīr*. On this treatise of Alexander of Aphrodisias and its use by Maimonides, cf. Translator's Introduction.

view of the circumstances of human individuals. But the evils befalling the latter derive from them or from the necessity of the nature of matter, as [the philosophers] always say and make clear. We have already made clear what was necessary regarding this.[2] After having established this foundation that destroys every good foundation and deforms the beauty | of every correct opinion, they tried to eliminate its disgracefulness through thinking that the knowledge of these things is impossible for the deity for various reasons. One of them is as follows: Particular things are apprehended by means of the senses only and not by the intellect; but God does not apprehend by means of a sense. Another one is as follows: Particular things are infinite, whereas knowledge consists in comprehending;[3] but what is infinite cannot be comprehended through knowledge. Again another one is as follows: The knowledge of things being produced in time, which are indubitably particular, would necessitate some change in Him; for it involves a renewal of knowledge after knowledge. Because we, the community of those who adhere to Law, claim that He had known them before they came about, they charge us with two disgraceful opinions: first, that science can be attached to pure nonbeing; and second, that the knowledge of a thing being in potentia and of its being in actu is one and the same thing. Their thoughts were sometimes opposed to one another: some[4] of them said that He knows only the species and not the individuals; whereas others[5] said that He knows nothing at all outside Himself, so that, according to this opinion, there is no multiplicity of cognitions there. There are also some philosophers who believe, as we do, that He, may He be exalted, knows everything and that nothing secret is at all hidden from Him. These are great men,[6] prior in time to Aristotle, who are also mentioned by Alexander in that treatise. But he rejects their opinion, saying that it is principally refuted by the fact that we see that good men are attained by evils and evil men obtain the good things.

To sum up: It has become clear to you that all of them, if they had found that the circumstances of the human individuals are well ordered—according to what appears as order to the multitude—would not at all have plunged into all this speculation and would not have grown confused.[7] What first impelled them toward this speculation was the fact that they considered

2. Cf. III 12.
3. The two senses of this word seem more or less to approximate the two senses of the word *iḥaṭa* used by Maimonides, which means both "to understand" and "to embrace," "to surround."
4. Or: one. 5. Or: another. 6. Of the philosophers.
7. Or: would not have been overhasty.

the circumstances of people, | of the wicked and the good, and that in their opinion these matters were not well ordered; as was said by those among us who were ignorant: *The way of the Lord is not well ordered.*[8]

After I have explained that the discussion concerning knowledge[9] and that concerning providence are connected, I shall begin to explain the opinions of those engaged in speculation concerning providence. After that I shall begin to resolve the doubts expressed with regard to the deity's knowledge of particular things.

CHAPTER 17

The opinions of people about providence are five in all.[1] And all of them are ancient; I mean that they are opinions that have been heard at the time of the prophets, since the true Law has appeared that has illumined all this darkness.

The first opinion is the profession of those that consider that there is no providence at all with regard to anything whatever in all that exists; that everything in it, the heavens and the things other than they, has happened by chance and in accordance with the way things were predisposed; and that there is no one who orders, governs, or is concerned with anything. This is the opinion of Epicurus. He also professes that there are atoms, and holds that they mingle according to chance and that what is generated out of them, is generated by chance. Those in *Israel* who were unbelievers also professed this opinion; they are those of whom it is said: *They have belied the Lord, and said: It is not He.*[2] Aristotle has demonstrated that this opinion is inadmissible; that it cannot be true that all things should have been generated by chance; and that, on the contrary, there is someone who orders and governs them. In what precedes we have already mentioned something of this.[3]

The second opinion is the opinion of those who hold that providence watches over certain things and that these exist through the governance | and the ordering of one who governs and orders, whereas other things are left to chance. This is the opinion of Aristotle. I will sum up for your benefit

8. Ezek. 33:17. 9. I.e., God's knowledge.
1. On Maimonides' sources for this chapter, cf. Translator's Introduction.
2. Jer. 5:12. 3. Cf. II 20.

his opinion on providence. He holds that God, may He be exalted, takes care of the spheres and of what is in them and that for this reason their individuals remain permanently as they are. Alexander has formulated this, saying that in Aristotle's opinion God's providence ends at the sphere of the moon. This is a branch deriving from his root doctrine concerning the eternity of the world, for he believes that providence corresponds to the nature of what exists. Accordingly with regard to the spheres, whose individuals are permanent, and what is in them, providence regarding them means that they remain permanent in a changeless state. But just as the existence of other things – whose individuals have not, but whose species have, an enduring existence – derives necessarily from theirs, there is likewise an overflow from the providence in question, which overflow necessitates the durability and permanence of the species, though the durability of the latter's individuals be impossible. However, the individuals of every species are also not neglected in every respect. For in all portions of this matter that have been purified to the point of receiving the form of growth, there are placed faculties that preserve them for a certain time through attracting toward them that which agrees with them and through repelling that which is not useful for them. Again in those portions of the matter in question that have been purified to a greater extent so that they received the form of sensation, there are placed other faculties, which preserve and safeguard them, as well as another capacity: namely, that of moving so as to direct themselves toward that which agrees with them and so as to flee from that which disagrees. Furthermore every individual has been given that which the species he belongs to needs. Finally such portions of the matter in question that have been purified to the point of receiving the form of the intellect have been given another faculty through which every one of them, according to the perfection of the individual in question, governs, thinks, and reflects on what may render possible the durability of himself as an individual and the preservation of his species. As for the other motions[4] that occur in all | individuals of a species, they occur by chance and do not, according to Aristotle, come about through the governance or ordering of one who governs or orders. For instance, if a hurricane or a wind of less than hurricane force should blow, it would indubitably bring some leaves of this particular tree to fall, break a branch of another tree, topple a stone from a certain fence, raise up the dust so that it covers a certain plant and causes its destruction, and agitate great waves in the water so that a ship that is there would founder and so that all the people that are on board, or at least some

4. Or: all the motions.

of them, would be drowned. Consequently, according to him,[5] there is no difference between the fall of the leaf and the fall of the stone, on the one hand, or the drowning of the excellent and superior men that were on board the ship, on the other. Similarly he does not differentiate between an ox that defecates upon a host of ants so that they die, or a building whose foundations are shaken upon all the people at their prayers who are found in it so that they die. And there is no difference, according to him, between a cat coming across a mouse and devouring it or a spider devouring a fly, on the one hand, or a ravenous lion meeting a prophet and devouring him, on the other. To sum up, the basis of his opinion is as follows: Everything that, according to what he saw, subsisted continuously without any corruption or change of proceeding at all—as, for instance, the states of the spheres—or that observed a certain orderly course, only deviating from it in anomalous cases—as, for instance, the natural things—was said by him to subsist through governance; I mean to say that divine providence accompanied it.[6] On the other hand, all that, according to what he saw, does not subsist continuously or adhere to a certain order—as, for instance, the circumstances of the individuals of every species of plants, animals, and man—are said by him to exist by chance and not through the governance of one who governs; he means thereby that they are not accompanied by divine providence, and he also holds that it is impossible that providence should accompany these circumstances. This is consequent upon his opinion concerning the eternity of the world | and the impossibility of that which exists being in any respect different from what it is. Those who, deviating from our Law, believed in this opinion were those who said: *The Lord hath forsaken the earth.*[7]

The third opinion is opposed to this second opinion, being the opinion of those who hold that in all that exists there is nothing either among universal or particular things that is in any respect due to chance, for everything comes about through will, purpose, and governance. Now it is clear that everything that is governed is also known.[8] This is the opinion of the Islamic sect, the Ashᶜariyya.[9] Great incongruities are bound up with this opinion, and those who hold it are burdened with them and obliged to accept them. Thus they agree with Aristotle regarding the equality that he establishes between the fall of a leaf and the death of a human individual. They say: This is so; but the wind does not blow by chance, for God sets it in

5. I.e., Aristotle. 6. According to Aristotle's opinion. 7. Ezek. 9:9.
8. Or: that everyone that governs also knows.
9. On this sect, cf. Translator's Introduction.

motion; and it is not the wind that causes the leaves to fall, for every leaf falls through an ordinance and a decree of God; and it is He who causes them to fall now in this particular place; it is not possible that the time of their falling should be postponed or retarded; nor is it possible that they should fall in another place than this, for all this has been everlastingly decreed. In consequence of this opinion, they are obliged to think that every motion and rest of animals has been decreed and that man has in no way the ability to do or not to do a thing. It is likewise a consequence of this opinion that the nature of the possible is abolished regarding these matters, so that all things are either necessary or impossible. They were accordingly obliged to accept this and said that the matters that we designate as possible – such as Zayd's standing up and ʿUmar's coming – are only possible with reference to us, but that there is nothing whatever possible in them with reference to Him, may He be exalted; rather | they are either necessary or impossible. It also follows necessarily from this opinion that what the Laws entail is quite useless; for man for whose benefit every Law has come, has not the ability to do anything either to fulfill what he has been commanded or to avoid what he has been forbidden. In fact this sect says that He, may He be exalted, willed this: to send messengers, to command, to forbid, to threaten, to give hope, and to instill fear, even though we do not have the ability to do anything of our own accord; it is permissible that He should impose upon us impossible things; and it is likewise permissible that, having obeyed His order, we should be punished; and that, having transgressed it, we should be rewarded. It also necessarily follows from this opinion that His actions, may He be exalted, have no final end. They bear the burden of all these incongruities for the sake of the integrity of this opinion. They go so far as to hold that if we see an individual who was born blind or a leper, although we are unable to say that he might have deserved this because of a previous sin of his, we should say: He has willed this. And if we see that an excellent man who was devoted to God's worship has been killed through torture, we should say: He has willed this. And in this there is no injustice, for according to them, it is permissible for God to punish one who has not sinned and to reward a sinner with benefits. Their dicta on these matters are well known.

The fourth opinion is the opinion of those who hold that man has the ability to act of his own accord; it is for this reason that, according to them, the commandments, prohibitions, rewards, and punishments figuring in the Law are well ordered. They hold that all the actions of God are consequent upon wisdom, that injustice is not permissible for Him, and that He

does not punish a man who does good. The Muʿtazila[10] also hold this opinion though, according to them, the ability of man to act of his own accord is not absolute. They also believe that He, may He be exalted, has knowledge of the falling of this particular leaf and of the creeping of this particular ant, and that His providence watches over all the beings. | Incongruities and contradictions follow necessarily also from this opinion. As for the incongruity, it is as follows. If some human individual is born with an infirmity without having sinned, they say: This is consequent upon His wisdom, and it is better for this individual to be thus than to be sound in body; we do not know in what this benefit consists, but this has not happened as a punishment for him, but as a benefit. And they have a similar answer with regard to the case in which an excellent man perishes, saying that this happens in order that his reward in the other world should become greater. Finally discussion with these reached a point at which they were asked: Why is He just toward man and not just to what is other than man? because of what sin has this particular animal been killed? Whereupon they assumed the burden of the following disgraceful answer: This is better for it,[11] so that God should compensate it in the other world. Even when a flea and a louse are killed, it is necessary that they have a compensation for them from God. They say in the same way that if this mouse, which has not sinned, is devoured by a cat or a hawk, His wisdom has required this with regard to the mouse and that the latter will receive compensation in the other world for what has happened to it.

To my mind no one among the partisans of these three opinions concerning providence should be blamed, for every one of them was impelled by strong necessity to say what he did. Aristotle followed what is manifest[12] in the nature of that which exists. The Ashʿariyya tried to avoid having to ascribe to Him, may He be exalted, ignorance with regard to anything, for it is not seemly to say that He knows this particular thing and is ignorant of that other particular thing. Thus the incongruities referred to were necessarily attached to, and borne by, them. The Muʿtazila also tried to avoid having to ascribe to Him, may He be exalted, injustice and wrongdoing. Moreover it was not fitting in their opinion to go against the inborn disposition by saying that there is no injustice in inflicting pain on one who has not sinned. Nor was it fitting in their opinion that all the prophets should have been sent and the Law revealed for no | intelligible purpose. Accordingly they too were burdened with incongruities referred to above,

10. On this sect, cf. Translator's Introduction.
11. I.e., for the animal. 12. *ẓāhir*, a word also used to signify "external."

and self-contradiction necessarily attached to them. For they believe both that He, may He be exalted, knows everything and that man has the ability to act; and this leads, as the slightest reflection should make clear, to self-contradiction.

The fifth opinion is our opinion, I mean the opinion of our Law. I shall let you know about it what has been literally stated in the books of our prophets and is believed by the multitude of our scholars; I shall also inform you of what is believed by some[13] of our latter-day scholars; and I shall also let you know what I myself believe about this. I say then: It is a fundamental principle of the Law of *Moses our Master*, peace be on him, and of all those who follow it that man has an absolute ability to act; I mean to say that in virtue of his nature, his choice, and his will, he may do everything that it is within the capacity of man to do, and this without there being created for his benefit in any way any newly produced thing. Similarly all the species of animals move in virtue of their own will. And He has willed it so; I mean to say that it comes from His eternal volition in the eternity a parte ante that all animals should move in virtue of their will and that man should have the ability to do whatever he wills or chooses among the things concerning which he has the ability to act. This is a fundamental principle about which – praise be to God! – no disagreement has ever been heard within our religious community. It is likewise one of the fundamental principles of the Law of *Moses our Master* that it is in no way possible that He, may He be exalted, should be unjust, and that all the calamities that befall men and the good things that come to men, be it a single individual or a group, are all of them determined according to the deserts of the men concerned through equitable judgment in which there is no injustice whatever. Thus if some individual were wounded in the hand by a thorn, which he would take out immediately, this would be a punishment for him, and if he received | the slightest pleasure, this would be a reward for him – all this being according to his deserts. Thus He, may He be exalted, says: *For all His ways are judgment, and so on.*[14] But we are ignorant of the various modes of deserts.

I have summed up these opinions for you as follows: All the various circumstances of the individuals among the Adamites are considered by Aristotle as due to pure chance, by the Ashᶜarite as consequent on will alone,[15] by the Muᶜtazila as consequent on wisdom,[16] and by us as consequent on the individual's deserts, according to his actions. For this reason the

13. Or: one. 14. Deut. 32:4. 15. I.e., the divine will.
16. I.e., the divine wisdom.

Ashᶜarite considers it as permissible that God should punish[17] an excellent and good man in this world and make him subsist eternally in that fire which is said to be in the other world. One merely says: He willed it so. The Muᶜtazila consider that this is injustice; and that one that has been punished, be it even an ant, as I have mentioned to you, receives a compensation; and that the fact that the being in question was punished in order to receive a compensation is consequent on His wisdom. As for us, we believe that all the human circumstances are according to the deserts, that He is exalted above injustice, and that among us only those deserving punishment are punished. This is what is stated literally in the *Torah of Moses our Master*, namely, that everything is consequent upon the deserts; and the multitude of our scholars also speak in accordance with this opinion. For you will find them saying explicitly: *There is no death without sin, and no sufferings without transgression.*[18] And they also say: *A man is measured with the measure he uses himself*;[19] this is the text of the *Mishnah*. And in every passage they state clearly that for Him, may He be exalted, justice is necessary and obligatory; namely, that an obedient individual receives compensation for all the pious and righteous actions he has accomplished, even if he was not ordered by a prophet to do them, and that he is punished for all evil acts committed by him, even if he was not forbidden by a prophet to do them; this being forbidden | by the inborn disposition—I refer to the prohibition against wrongdoing and injustice. Thus they say: *The Holy One, blessed be He, does not withhold from any creature that which it has deserved.*[20] They also say: *Everyone that says that the Holy One, blessed be He, is indulgent [in forgiving] should have his bowels torn. Rather is He long-suffering, but He exacts what is due to Him.*[21] And: *He who does [a thing] having been commanded [to do it] does not resemble him who does [it] without having been commanded.*[22] Thus they have made it clear that even he who has not been charged with a commandment *is given his reward.* All their discourse consistently conforms to this principle. However, in the discourse of the *Sages*, there occurs something additional over and above what is to be found in the text of the *Torah*, namely, the dictum of some of them regarding the

17. Unjustly, according to human judgment. 18. B.T., Shabbath, 55a.
19. Mishnah, Sota, I 7.
20. B.T., Baba Qamma, 38b; B.T., Pesaḥim, 118a.
21. Genesis Rabbah, LXVII; B.T., Baba Qamma, 50a.
22. B.T., Qiddushin, 31a; B.T., Baba Qamma, 87a; B.T., ᶜAbodah Zarah, 3a. The talmudic text that has come down to us differs somewhat from Maimonides' quotation. It may be translated: *He who has been commanded [to do a thing] and does [it] is greater than he who does without having been commanded.*

sufferings of love.[23] For according to this opinion, sometimes misfortunes befall an individual not because of his having sinned before, but in order that his reward should be greater. This is also the teaching of the Muʿtazila. But there is no text in the *Torah* expressing this notion. For you should not be led into error by what is said about *putting to trial*, as when *God put Abraham to a trial*,[24] and as when it says: *And He afflicted thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and so on.*[25] You shall hear the discourse about this later on.[26] Our Law is exclusively concerned with the circumstances of human individuals; and in ancient times the story of this compensation accorded to animals has never been heard in our religious community;[27] nor was it ever mentioned by one of the *Sages*. But some[28] of the latter-day *Gaonim, may their memory be blessed*, have heard it from the Muʿtazila and have approved of it and believed it.

As for my own belief with regard to this fundamental principle, I mean divine providence, it is as I shall set it forth to you. In this belief that I shall set forth, I am not relying upon the conclusion to which demonstration has led me, but upon what has clearly appeared as the intention of the book of God and of the books of our prophets. This opinion, which I believe, is less disgraceful than the preceding opinions and nearer than they to intellectual reasoning. For I for one believe that | in this lowly world – I mean that which is beneath the sphere of the moon – divine providence watches only over the individuals belonging to the human species and that in this species alone all the circumstances of the individuals and the good and evil that befall them are consequent upon the deserts, just as it says: *For all His ways are judgment.*[29] But regarding all the other animals and, all the more, the plants and other things, my opinion is that of Aristotle. For I do not by any means believe that this particular leaf has fallen because of a providence watching over it; nor that this spider has devoured this fly because God has now decreed and willed something concerning individuals; nor that the spittle spat by Zayd has moved till it came down in one particular place upon a gnat and killed it by a divine decree and judgment; nor that when this fish snatched this worm from the face of the water, this happened in virtue of a divine volition concerning individuals. For all this is in my opinion due to pure chance, just as Aristotle holds. According to me, as I consider the matter, divine providence is consequent upon the divine overflow; and the species

23. B.T., Berakhoth, 5a. 24. Gen. 22:1. 25. Deut. 8:3. 26. Cf. III 24.
27. *milla*. 28. Or: one. 29. Deut. 32:4.

with which this intellectual overflow is united, so that it became endowed with intellect and so that everything that is disclosed to a being endowed with the intellect was disclosed to it, is the one accompanied by divine providence, which appraises[30] all its actions[31] from the point of view of reward and punishment. If, as he[32] states, the foundering of a ship and the drowning of those who were in it and the falling-down of a roof upon those who were in the house, are due to pure chance, the fact that the people in the ship went on board and that the people in the house were sitting in it is, according to our opinion, not due to chance, but to divine will in accordance with the deserts of those people as determined in His judgments, the rule of which cannot be attained by our intellects.

I was impelled to adopt this | belief by the fact that I never found in the book of a prophet a text mentioning that God has a providence watching over one of the animal individuals, but only over a human individual. The prophets are even sometimes astonished because providence watches over human individuals – man being too insignificant for providence to watch over him – and all the more, over the other animals. Thus it says: *What is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him, and so on.*[33] *What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and so on.*[34] Sometimes, however, there are clear texts concerning providence watching over all the human individuals and exercising a surveillance over all their actions. Thus: *He that fashioneth the hearts of them all, that considereth all their works.*[35] It says: *For Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of man, to give every one according to his ways.*[36] It is also said: *For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings.*[37] The *Torah* too sometimes makes explicit statements concerning providence watching over human individuals and exercising a surveillance over their actions. Thus it says: *Nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.*[38] And: *Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.*[39] And: *That same soul will I destroy.*[40] And: *I will even set My face against that soul.*[41] Such statements occur frequently. And all the stories figuring [in Scripture] concerning *Abraham* and *Isaac* and *Jacob* are an absolute proof of there being an individual providence. As for the other individuals of animals, the position with regard to them is indubitably as Aristotle sees it. For this reason killing them and

30. *qaddarat.* The word also means "determines"; it is possible that it was this latter sense that Maimonides had in view in this passage.
31. I.e., those of the individuals belonging to this species.
32. Aristotle. 33. Ps. 144:3. 34. Ps. 8:5.
35. Ps. 33:15. 36. Jer. 32:19. 37. Job 34:21. 38. Exod. 32:34.
39. Exod. 32:33. 40. Lev. 23:30. 41. Lev. 20:6.

employing them usefully, as we wish, has been permitted and even enjoined. A proof that there is no providence watching over the animals other than man, except the kind of providence mentioned by Aristotle, may be found in the dictum of the prophet when he saw *Nebuchadnezzar's* tyranny and his great massacres of people. For the prophet says: O Lord, it is as if men were neglected and abandoned like fishes and insects of the earth; he indicates by this dictum that these species are neglected. For this is what he says: *And makest man as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no | ruler over them. They take up all of them with the angle, and so on.*[42] Thereupon,[43] however, the prophet explains that this is not so; that what happened was not due to neglect and the withdrawal of providence, but was a punishment for those men because they deserved what befell them. For he says: *O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment, and Thou, O Rock, hast established them for correction.*[44]

Do not think that this opinion may be refuted in opposition to me by means of its dicta: *He giveth to the beast his food, and so on;*[45] *The young lions roar after their prey, and so on;*[46] *Thou openest Thy hand, and satisfiest every living thing with favor;*[47] and also by means of the dictum of the *Sages: He is seated and feeds all things from the horns of buffaloes to the eggs of lice.*[48] You will find many such texts; but there is nothing in them that disproves this opinion of mine. For all these texts refer to providence watching over the species and not to individual providence. It is as if they described His bounty, may He be exalted, which prepares for every species the food necessary for it and the matter for its subsistence. This is clear and manifest. Aristotle likewise holds that this kind of providence is necessary and exists. Alexander[49] too mentions this concerning Aristotle, namely, the preparation of the existence of the food required by every species for its individuals. Were it not for this, the species would indubitably perish. This is clear upon the slightest consideration. As for their dictum: [*To avoid causing*] *suffering to animals is* [*an injunction to be found*] *in the Torah*[50] — in which they refer to its dictum: *Wherefore hast thou smitten thine she-ass*[51] — it is set down with a view to perfecting us so that we should not acquire moral habits of cruelty and should not inflict pain gratuitously without any utility, but that we should intend to be kind and merciful even with a chance animal individual,

42. Hab. 1:14–15.
43. Actually Maimonides here refers to verses preceding those he has just quoted.
44. Hab. 1:12. 45. Ps. 147:9.
46. Ps. 104:21. The verse continues: *and seek their food from God.* 47. Ps. 145:16.
48. B.T., Shabbath, 107b; B.T., ʿAbodah Zarah, 3b.
49. Of Aphrodisias. 50. B.T., Baba Meṣiʿa, 32b. Cf. B.T., Shabbath, 154b.
51. Num. 22:32.

except in case of need — *Because thy soul desireth to eat flesh*[52] — for we must not kill out of cruelty or for sport. It does not follow for me that by virtue of this opinion, one may pose to me the following question, namely: Why does He watch over the human individuals, and does not watch in the same way over the individuals | belonging to the other species of animals? For he who propounds this question ought to ask himself: Why did He give intellect to man and not to the other species of animals? The answer to this last question is: He willed it so; or, His wisdom has required this to be so; or, nature has required this to be so — all according to which of the three preceding opinions one adopts. Now the selfsame answers may be given to the first question.

Grasp my opinion up to its last implications. I do not believe that anything is hidden from Him, may He be exalted, nor do I attribute to Him a lack of power. But I believe that providence is consequent upon the intellect and attached to it. For providence can only come from an intelligent being, from One who is an intellect perfect with a supreme perfection, than which there is no higher. Accordingly everyone with whom something of this overflow is united, will be reached by providence to the extent to which he is reached by the intellect. This is the opinion that to my mind corresponds to the intelligible and to the texts of the Law. As for the three preceding opinions, they either are excessive or they fall short. Those that are excessive lead to an absolute confusion and to contesting the intelligible and to opposing what is perceived by the senses; whereas the others that greatly fall short entail most vicious beliefs concerning the deity, as well as the ruin of order in human existence and the obliteration of all good qualities of man, both the moral and the rational. I am referring to the opinion of those who abolish providence with respect to human individuals, putting the latter on a par with the individuals of the other species of animals.

CHAPTER 18

After what I have stated before about providence singling out the human species | alone among all the species of animals, I say that it is known that no species exists outside the mind, but that the species and the other universals are, as you know, mental notions and that every existent outside the mind is an individual or a group of individuals. This being known, it is

52. Deut. 12:20.

also known that the divine overflow that exists united to the human species, I mean the human intellect, is merely what exists as individual intellects—that is, what has overflowed toward Zayd, ʿUmar, Khalid, and Bakr. Now if this is so, it follows necessarily according to what I have mentioned in the preceding chapter that when any human individual has obtained, because of the disposition of his matter and his training, a greater portion of this overflow than others, providence will of necessity watch more carefully over him than over others—if, that is to say, providence is, as I have mentioned, consequent upon the intellect. Accordingly divine providence does not watch in an equal manner over all the individuals of the human species, but providence is graded as their human perfection is graded. In accordance with this speculation it follows necessarily that His providence, may He be exalted, that watches over the prophets is very great and proportionate to their degree in prophecy and that His providence that watches over excellent and righteous men is proportionate to their excellence and righteousness. For it is this measure of the overflow of the divine intellect that makes the prophets speak, guides the actions of righteous men, and perfects the knowledge of excellent men with regard to what they know. As for the ignorant and disobedient, their state is despicable proportionately to their lack of this overflow, and they have been relegated to the rank of the individuals of all the other species of animals: *He is like the beasts that speak not.*[1] For this reason it is a light thing to kill them, and has been even enjoined because of its utility. This matter is one of the fundamental principles of the Law, which is built upon it, I mean to say upon the principle that providence watches over | each human individual in the manner proper to him.

Consider in what way the texts [of Scripture] speak of providence watching over the details of the circumstances of the *Patriarchs* in their various activities and even in their acquisition of property, and what they were promised in consequence of providence accompanying them. It was said to *Abraham: I am thy shield.*[2] And to *Isaac: And I will be with thee, and will bless thee.*[3] And to *Jacob: And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest.*[4] And to the Master of the prophets: *Certainly I will be with thee.*[5] And to *Joshua: As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.*[6] All these are explicit affirmations of providence watching over them according to the measure of their perfection. With regard to providence watching over excellent men and neglecting the ignorant, it is said: *He will keep the*

1. Ps. 49:13 and 21. 2. Gen. 15:1. 3. Gen. 26:3. 4. Gen. 28:15.
5. Exod. 3:12. 6. Josh. 1:5.

feet of His holy ones, but the wicked shall be put to silence in darkness; for not by strength shall man prevail.[7] It says thereby that the fact that some individuals are preserved from calamities, whereas those befall others, is due not to their bodily forces and their natural dispositions—this being the meaning of the dictum, *For not by strength shall man prevail*—but to their perfection and deficiency, I mean their nearness to, or remoteness from, God. For this reason, those who are near to Him are exceedingly well protected: *He will keep the feet of His holy ones;* whereas those who are far from Him are given over to whatever may happen to befall them. For there is nothing to protect them against whatever may occur; for they are like one walking in darkness, whose destruction is assured. With regard to providence watching over the excellent ones, it is also said: *He keepeth all his bones, and so on;*[8] *The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and so on;*[9] *He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him, and so on.*[10] The texts that occur with regard to this notion are so numerous that they cannot be counted; I refer to the notion of providence watching over human individuals according to the measure of their perfection and excellence. The philosophers too mention this notion. Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī] says in the Introduction to his Commentary on Aristotle's "Nicomachean [Ethics]":[11] | Those who have the capacity of making their soul pass from one moral quality to another are those of whom Plato has said that God's providence watches over them to a higher degree.

Consider how this kind of consideration has conducted us to the knowledge of the correctness of what all the prophets, may peace be on them, have said concerning individual providence watching over each individual in particular according to the measure of his perfection, and how this consideration follows necessarily from the point of view of speculation, provided that, as we have mentioned, providence is consequent upon the intellect. It would not be proper for us to say that providence watches over the species and not the individuals, as is the well-known opinion of some philosophic schools. For outside the mind nothing exists except the individuals; it is to these individuals that the divine intellect is united. Consequently providence watches only over these individuals. Consider this chapter as it ought to be considered; for through it all the fundamental principles of the Law will become safe for you and conformable for you to speculative philosophic opinions; disgraceful views will be abolished; and the form of providence, as it is, will become clear to you.

7. I Sam. 2:9. 8. Ps. 34:21. 9. Ps. 34:16.
10. Ps. 91:15. 11. This commentary seems to be lost.

After we have mentioned the opinion of people engaged in speculation concerning providence and the manner in which God governs the world, I shall also sum up for you the opinion of the people of our religious community concerning knowledge[12] and a discourse of mine about this.

CHAPTER 19

No doubt it is a primary notion that all good things must exist in God and that with regard to Him all deficiencies must be denied. It is almost a primary notion that ignorance with regard to anything whatever is a deficiency and that He, may He be exalted, is ignorant of nothing. However what incited, as I have mentioned to you, some[1] of the people of speculation | to have the temerity to say, He knows thus and not otherwise, was what they imagined as to the lack of order in the circumstances of the human individuals. Yet most of these circumstances are not merely natural, but also consequent upon the fact that man is endowed with the ability to act and with reflection. The prophets have already mentioned that the ignorant infer that the deity has no knowledge of our actions merely from the fact that they see wicked people living in prosperity and abundance. For this impels the excellent man to think that his inclination toward the good and the hardships due to the opposition of others that he endures because of that, are useless. Thereupon the prophet has mentioned that he had let his thought wander freely with regard to this subject until it had become clear to him that things should be considered as they are in their final outcome and not in their beginnings. This is how he describes the order of all these thoughts. He says: *And they say: How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, such are the wicked; and they that are always at ease increase riches. Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocency.*[2] Then he says: *And when I pondered how I might know this, it was wearisome in mine eyes; until I entered into the sanctuary of God, and considered their end. Surely in slippery places, and so on.*[3] *How are they a desolation in a moment, and so on.*[4] These same thoughts are mentioned by

12. I.e., divine knowledge.
1. Or: one. 2. Ps. 73:11–13.
3. The whole phrase reads: *Surely Thou settest them in slippery places.*
4. Ps. 73:16–19.

Malachi, who says: *Your words have been all too strong against Me, saith the Lord, and so on. Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked mournfully because of the Lord of hosts? And now we call the wicked happy, and so on. Then they that feared the Lord spoke, and so on. Then shall ye again discern, and so on.*[5] *David* too has made clear that that opinion[6] was well known in his time and has made clear its necessary consequences, namely, the wronging and unjust treatment of men by one another. And he began to argue with a view to destroying that opinion and to making it known that He, may He be exalted, knows all this. | He says: *They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. And they say: The Lord will not see, neither will the God of Jacob give heed. Consider ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?*[7]

I shall now explain to you the meaning of this argument after I have mentioned to you the way in which those who are overhasty in their interpretations of the prophets' discourse, misunderstand this discourse. Several years ago some distinguished individuals of our religious community, who were physicians, told me that they wondered at this dictum of *David*. They said: According to his way of reasoning, it would follow necessarily that the Creator of the mouth eats and the Creator of the lung shouts and the same would hold for all the other members. Reflect now, you who study this Treatise of mine, how far they were from a correct understanding of this argument, and hear its true meaning: In the case of everyone who makes any instrument, it is clear that unless he had a conception of the work to be done with that instrument, he would be unable to make it. For instance, unless a smith had a conception and an understanding of the meaning of sewing, he would not make a needle in that form which alone permits performing the act of sewing. The same applies to the other instruments. When, therefore, some of the philosophers thought that God does not apprehend these individual things because they are apprehended by the senses, whereas He, may He be exalted, does not apprehend with a sense but through an intellectual apprehension, he[8] argued against them by starting from the existence of the senses, saying: If the meaning of the apprehension of the sense of sight is hidden from Him and He does not know it, how did

5. Mal. 3:13–18.
6. I.e., the opinion that God has no knowledge of what happens in relation to human individuals.
7. Ps. 94:6–9. 8. I.e., David.

He bring into existence this instrument, which is disposed for visual apprehension? Do you hold that it could have happened by chance that a certain clear humor should be produced, and outside it another similar humor, and again outside it a certain membrane | in which a hole happened to be bored, and in front of that hole a clear and hard membrane? To sum up: Can someone endowed with intelligence conceive that the humors, membranes, and nerves of the eye—which, as is known, are so well arranged and all of which have as their purpose the final end of this act of seeing—have come about fortuitously? Certainly not. But as every physician and every philosopher has set forth, this is brought about of necessity through a purpose of nature. Now according to the general consensus of philosophers, nature is not endowed with intellect and the capacity for governance. Rather does this craftsmanlike governance proceed, according to the opinion of the philosophers, from an intellectual principle; and, according to us, it is the act of an intelligent being who impressed all the faculties in question into all the things in which a natural faculty exists. If, however, that intellect does not apprehend or know the matter in question, how—according to that opinion—can he have brought into existence, or how can there have proceeded from him, a nature tending toward a purpose of which he has no knowledge? Accordingly it is with truth that he[9] called them *brutish* and *fools*. Thereupon he begins to make clear that this is a deficiency in our apprehension; that God, may He be honored and magnified, who has given us the intellect with which we apprehend—and because of our incapacity to apprehend His true reality, may He be exalted, there arise in us these great doubts—knows, may He be exalted, this our deficiency; and that no attention should be directed to the rash reflections necessarily proceeding from this our inadequate thought.[10] He[11] says: *He that teacheth man knowledge; the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.*[12]

The whole of my aim in this chapter was to make it clear that this speculation is very ancient; I refer to the notion that God lacks apprehension, which has occurred to the ignorant in view of the fact that the circumstances of the human individuals, which by their nature are contingent, are not well ordered. Thus it says: *And the Children of Israel did impute things that were not | right unto the Lord.*[13] And it is said in the *Midrash: What did*

9. I.e., David.

10. According to certain manuscripts and Alḥarizi's Hebrew translation, the last part of this sentence could be rendered: and that their inadequate thought pays no attention to the rash reflections it has of necessity brought about.

11. I.e., David. 12. Ps. 94:10–11. 13. II Kings 17:9.

they say? They said: This column neither sees nor hears nor speaks.[14] They[15] wished to refer by this to their[16] imagining that God does not apprehend these circumstances and that no command or prohibition from Him reaches the prophets. The cause of all this and, according to them, the proof of it, are to be found in the fact that the circumstances of the human individuals do not take a course that is in accordance with what, as every one of us considers, ought to happen. Accordingly when they saw that things were not as they wished, they said: *The Lord seeth us not.*[17] *Zephaniah* says concerning these: [*Those*] *that say in their heart: The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.*[18]

As for what should be said concerning His knowledge, may He be exalted, of all things, I shall inform you of my opinion concerning this after I have made known to you the matters about which there is general consensus and that no one endowed with intellect can contradict in any point.

CHAPTER 20

A matter concerning which there is a general consensus is that it is not true that new knowledge should come to Him, may He be exalted, so that He would know now what He did not know before. And it is not true, even according to the opinion of those who believe in the attributes,[1] that He should have many and numerous insights. After this has been demonstrated, we, the community of those who adhere to a Law, say that He knows with one single knowledge the many and numerous things. For as far as He, may He be exalted, is concerned, insights do not differ because of the difference of the things known, as is the case in respect to us. Similarly we say that He has known all the things that are produced anew before they have come about and that He has known them perpetually. | For this reason no new knowledge comes to Him in any way. For, seeing that He knows that a certain man is now nonexistent, but will exist at a certain time, will go on existing for such and such a duration, and will then again become nonexistent, there will be for Him no additional knowledge when that individual comes into existence as He had known beforehand. Nothing was

14. The Midrash is unknown. 15. The authors of the Midrash.
16. The Children of Israel are meant. 17. Ezek. 8:12. 18. Zeph. 1:12.
1. I.e., the divine attributes.

produced thereby[2] that was unknown to Him. On the contrary, something was produced of which it had been perpetually known that it would be produced in the way it came into existence. Thus it follows necessarily from this belief that knowledge may have as its object nonexistent things and may embrace the infinite. And this is indeed our belief. For we say that it is not impossible that His knowledge should have as its object the nonexistent things about whose being brought into existence He knew beforehand and that He is able to bring into existence. On the other hand, that which is never brought into existence is, with reference to His knowledge, an absolutely nonexistent thing,[3] which is not an object for His knowledge, as that which is nonexistent for us is not an object for our knowledge.

As for knowledge of the infinite, there is a difficulty about it. Some of the people of speculation came to profess the opinion that knowledge[4] has for its object the species, but, in a certain sense, extends to all the individuals of the species. This is the opinion of all those who adhere to a Law in view of what is required by the necessities of speculation. The philosophers, however, affirm decidedly that His knowledge may not have for its object a nonexistent thing and that no knowledge may embrace that infinite; consequently, as no new knowledge may come to Him, it is impossible that He should know anything of the things that are produced anew. Accordingly He only knows the permanent immutable thing. Another doubt, however, arose in some[5] of them, and they said: Even if He should know only the permanent things, He would have many insights. For if the things known become many, the insights regarding them become many. For to everything known there is a knowledge that is special for it. Consequently | He only knows His own essence.[6]

What I myself say is that all these difficulties to which all of them are subject have as their cause the fact that they established a relation between our knowledge and His, may He be exalted; for every sect considers the things that are impossible for our knowledge and consequently thinks that this also holds necessarily with regard to His knowledge or else that the thing is obscure for it. The philosophers ought to be blamed more strongly than anyone else with regard to this question. For they were those who have demonstrated that there is no multiplicity in His essence,[7] may He be exalted, and that He has no attribute beyond His essence; but that, on the contrary, His knowledge is His essence, and His essence His knowledge. As

2. Through that individual's coming into existence. 3. Or: absolute nonexistence.
4. I.e., divine knowledge. 5. Or: one. 6. Or: self. 7. Or: self.

we have explained, they were those who have demonstrated that our intellects are incapable of apprehending the true reality of His essence as it really is. How then can they think that they can apprehend His knowledge, seeing that His knowledge is not a thing that is outside of His essence? For the selfsame incapacity that prevents our intellects from apprehending His essence also prevents them from apprehending His knowledge of things as they are. For this knowledge is not of the same species as ours so that we can draw an analogy with regard to it, but a totally different thing. And just as there is a necessarily existent essence from which – according to their opinion – every existent derives of necessity, or that – according to our opinion – produces all the things that are other than itself after they have been nonexistent – so do we say that this essence apprehends all that is other than itself; that in all the things that exist,[8] nothing whatever is hidden from it; and that between our knowledge and His knowledge there is nothing in common, as there is nothing in common between our essence and His essence. With regard to this point, only the equivocality of the term "knowledge" occasions the error; for there is a community only in the terms, whereas in the true reality of the things there is a difference. It is from this that incongruities follow necessarily, as we imagine that things that obligatorily pertain to our knowledge pertain also to His knowledge.

One of the things that have become clear to me by the texts of the *Torah* is that His knowledge, may He be exalted, that a certain possible[9] thing | will come into existence, does not in any way make that possible thing quit the nature of the possible. On the contrary, the nature of the possible remains with it; and knowledge concerning what possible things will be produced,[10] does not entail one of the two possibilities becoming necessary. This is also one of the fundamental principles of the Law of *Moses*, a principle concerning which there is neither doubt nor a contestation. If this were not so, it would not have said: *Then thou shalt make a parapet for thy roof*,[11] and likewise: *Lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.*[12] Similarly the whole of religious legislation, the commandments, and the prohibitions, goes back to this principle: namely, that His knowledge concerning what will happen does not make this possible thing quit its nature. However, this constitutes a great difficulty for the apprehension of our inadequate intellects.

Consider in how many ways His knowledge differs from ours, according to the opinion of all those who adhere to a Law. In the first place, His

8. Or: that He (or: it) has brought into existence. 9. I.e., contingent.
10. Or: what will be produced from the possible. 11. Deut. 22:8. 12. Deut. 20:7.

knowledge, while being one, corresponds to many known things belonging to various species. In the second place, it may have as its object something that does not exist. In the third place, it may have as its object something that is infinite. In the fourth place, His knowledge undergoes no changes in its apprehension of things produced in time. And yet it might seem that the knowledge that a thing will exist is not identical with the knowledge that it already exists; for there is in the latter case a certain surplus, namely, the fact that what had been in potentia became actual. In the fifth place, it is in accordance with the opinion of our Law that God's knowledge, may He be exalted, does not bring about the actualization of one of the two possibilities even though He, may He be exalted, knows perfectly how one of them will come about. Accordingly, would that I knew in what way, according to the opinion of those who believe that knowledge is a superadded attribute,[13] our knowledge resembles His and whether there is here something other than a mere community in the terms. According to our opinion—that is, the opinion of people who say that His knowledge is not something superadded to His essence—it is truly necessary that His knowledge should differ from ours | in substance, just as the substance of the heavens differs from the substance of the earth. The prophets have explicitly stated this, saying: *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*[14]

To sum up the notion that I have stated in résumé: Just as we do not apprehend the true reality of His essence, but know withal that His existence is the most perfect of existences and not commingled in any way with any deficiency or change or being acted upon, so although we do not know the true reality of His knowledge because it is His essence, we do know that He does not apprehend at certain times while being ignorant at others. I mean to say that no new knowledge comes to Him in any way; that His knowledge is neither multiple nor finite; that nothing among all the beings is hidden from Him; and that His knowledge of them does not abolish their natures, for the possible remains as it was with the nature of possibility. All the contradictions that may appear in the union of these assertions are due to their being considered in relation to our knowledge, which has only its name in common with His knowledge. Similarly the word "purpose" is used equivocally when applied to what is purposed by us and to what is said to be His purpose, may He be exalted. Similarly the word "providence" is used

13. I.e., an attribute superadded to God's essence. 14. Isa. 55:8–9.

equivocally when applied to what we are provident about and to that of which it is said that He, may He be exalted, is provident with regard to it. It is accordingly true that the meaning of knowledge, the meaning of purpose, and the meaning of providence, when ascribed to us, are different from the meanings of these terms when ascribed to Him. When, therefore, the two providences or knowledges or purposes are taken to have one and the same meaning, the above-mentioned difficulties and doubts arise. When, on the other hand, it is known that everything that is ascribed to us is different from everything ascribed to Him, truth becomes manifest. The differences between the things ascribed | to Him and those ascribed to us have been explicitly stated, as have been mentioned above, in its dictum: *Neither are your ways My ways.*

CHAPTER 21

A great disparity subsists between the knowledge an artificer has of the thing he has made and the knowledge someone else has of the artifact in question. For if the artifact was made in a way conforming to the knowledge of its artificer, the artificer only made it through following his own knowledge. With regard to the other one who looks at that artifact, comprehending it with his knowledge, his knowledge follows the artifact. Thus, for instance, the artificer who made this box in which weights are moved by the flow of water so as to indicate the hours of the day or the night that have passed, apprehends and knows all the quantity of water that must flow in it, the changes in the position of the flow, all the threads that are drawn, and all the balls that come down. And he knows these motions not because he looks at the motions that take place now. The converse is true, for the motions that take place now only come about because they conform to his knowledge. However, this does not hold in the case of someone who looks at this instrument. For whenever the onlooker sees a movement, he obtains new knowledge. And by not ceasing to look on and gradually to obtain increase of new knowledge, he acquires in this way a knowledge of the whole of the instrument. However, if you suppose that the motions of this instrument are infinite, the onlooker could never contain them in his knowledge. In addition, the onlooker is incapable of knowing any | of these motions before they take place, for he only knows whatever he knows on the basis of

what takes place. Such is the case with regard to that which exists[1] taken as a whole in its relation to our knowledge and His knowledge, may He be exalted. For we know all that we know only through looking at the beings; therefore our knowledge does not grasp the future or the infinite. Our insights are renewed and multiplied according to the things from which we acquire the knowledge of them. He, may He be exalted, is not like that. I mean that His knowledge of things is not derived from them, so that there is multiplicity and renewal of knowledge. On the contrary, the things in question follow upon His knowledge, which preceded and established them as they are: either as the existence of what is separate from matter; or as the existence of a permanent individual endowed with matter; or as the existence of what is endowed with matter and has changing individuals, but follows on an incorruptible and immutable order. Hence, with regard to Him, may He be exalted, there is no multiplicity of insights and renewal and change of knowledge. For through knowing the true reality of His own immutable essence, He also knows the totality of what necessarily derives from all His acts. For us to desire to have an intellectual cognition of the way this comes about is as if we desired that we be He and our apprehension be His apprehension. He who studies true reality equitably ought accordingly to believe that nothing is hidden in any way from Him, may He be exalted, but that, on the contrary, everything is revealed to His knowledge, which is His essence, and that it is impossible for us to know in any way this kind of apprehension. If we knew how it comes about, we would have an intellect in virtue of which an apprehension of this kind might be had. This, however, is a thing that in what exists[2] belongs only to Him, may He be exalted, and it is His essence. Understand this then. For I say that this is something most extraordinary and a true opinion; if it is carefully studied, no mistake or distortion will be found in it, nor will | incongruities be attached to it; and no deficiency is ascribed through it to God. No demonstration at all can be obtained with regard to these great and sublime notions, either for our opinion – that of the community of those who adhere to a Law – or for the opinion of the philosophers, even if one considers all the differences among the latter with regard to this question. And with regard to all problems with reference to which there is no demonstration, the method used by us with regard to this question – I mean the question of the deity's knowledge of what is other than He – ought to be followed. Understand this.

1. Literally: existence. 2. Literally: existence.

CHAPTER 22

The story of *Job*, which is extraordinary and marvellous, belongs to the kind of things we are discussing now. I mean to say that it is a parable intended to set forth the opinions of people concerning providence. You know the explicit statement of some of [the Sages]: *Job has not existed and was not created, but was a parable.*[1] Those, on the other hand, who believe that he *has existed and was created* and that the story has happened, do not know at what time and in what place he lived. For some of the *Sages* say that he lived *in the days of the Patriarchs*, whereas others say that he lived *in the days of Moses;* again others say that he lived *in the days of David;* again others say that he was one of *those who came back from Babylon.* This confirms the opinions of those who say that *he has not existed and was not created.* To sum up: *whether he has existed or not*, with regard to cases[2] like his, which always exist, all reflecting people become perplexed; and in consequence such things as I have already mentioned to you are said about God's knowledge and His providence. I refer to the assertion that a righteous and perfect man, who was just in his actions and is most careful to avoid sins, was stricken — without his having committed a sin entailing this — by great and consecutive calamities with respect to | his fortune, his children, and his body. Now according to both opinions, the one that considers that *he has existed* and the one that considers that *he has not*, the prologue — I mean the discourse of *Satan*, that of God addressed to *Satan*, and the giving-over [of Job to Satan] — is indubitably, in the view of everyone endowed with intellect, a parable. However, it is not a parable like all others, but one to which extraordinary notions *and things that are the mystery of the universe*[3] are attached. Through it great enigmas are solved, and truths than which none is higher become clear. I shall mention to you what it is possible to mention, and I shall mention to you the words of the *Sages* that have drawn my attention to everything that I understand in this great parable.

The first thing that you will consider is its dictum, *There was a man in the land of Uṣ*,[4] in which figures the equivocal word *Uṣ*. It is the name of an individual: *Uṣ his first-born;*[5] and also the imperative of a verb meaning to reflect and meditate: *Uṣu ʿeṣah* [*take counsel together*].[6] It is as if [Scripture]

1. B.T., Baba Bathra, 15a.
2. Or, according to certain manuscripts: stories like his.
3. The expression quoted occurs in B.T., Ḥagigah, 13a, but refers there to Ezekiel's vision.
4. Job 1:1. 5. Gen. 22:21. 6. Isa. 8:10.

said to you: Meditate and reflect on this parable, grasp its meaning, and see what the true opinion is. Then it mentions that *the sons of God* came *to present themselves before the Lord* and that *Satan* came in the midst of their crowd and multitude. For it does not say, *The sons of God and Satan came to present themselves before the Lord*, which would have meant that all of them were there because of an identical relation, but says: *The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.*[7] This form of speech is only used with regard to one who has come without having been for his own sake the object of an intention or having been sought for his own sake, but came in the midst of those who came when those whose presence was the object of an intention presented themselves. Then it mentions that this *Satan* roamed and went all over the earth. Thus there is no relationship whatever between him and the upper world, in which there is no road for him. This is the meaning of its saying: *From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*[8] Thus his going to and fro and his roaming take place on the earth. |

Then it mentions that this righteous and perfect man was delivered into the hands of this *Satan* and that all the calamities that befell him with respect to his fortune, his children, and his body, were caused by *Satan*. After having made this supposition it begins to set down speeches of people engaged in speculation with regard to this occurrence. Thus it mentions a certain opinion and ascribes it to *Job*, and ascribes other opinions to his friends. I shall make them clearly known to you; I am referring to those opinions about which there has been a conflict of thoughts and that are concerned with a story the cause of the whole of which was *Satan*; though all of them, *Job* and his friends, thought that God had done it Himself and not through the intermediary of *Satan*. The most marvellous and extraordinary thing about this story is the fact that knowledge is not attributed in it to *Job*. He is not said to be a *wise* or a *comprehending* or an *intelligent man*. Only moral virtue and righteousness in action are ascribed to him. For if he had been *wise*, his situation would not have been obscure for him, as will become clear.

Then it graduates his misfortunes according to the various circumstances of people. For some people are not frightened by the loss of their fortune and hold it a small thing, but are horrified by the death of their children and die because of their grief. Others support with patience and without terror even the loss of their children, but no one endowed with sensation can support pain patiently. Now all men, I mean the vulgar, glorify

7. Job 1:6; 2:1. 8. Job 1:7; 2:2.

God with their tongues and attribute to Him justice and beneficence when they are happy and prosperous or even when they are in a state of endurable suffering. However, when the misfortunes mentioned in *Job* befall them, some of them become unbelievers and believe that there is little order in all that exists at the time when they lose their fortune; others hold to the belief in justice and order in spite even of their having been stricken by the loss of their fortune, but | do not keep patient if tried by the loss of their children. Others again are patient and keep an untroubled belief even when they lose their children, but none of them supports patiently the pain of the body without complaining and repining either with the tongue or in the heart.

The dictum [of Scripture] referring to *the sons of God* says in the two passages: *To present themselves before the Lord.*[9] *Satan*, however, though he came among their crowd and multitude a first and a second time, is not said in the first passage *to present himself*. In the second passage, however, it says: *And Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.*[10] Understand this notion and consider how extraordinary it is, and see how these notions came to me through something similar to prophetic revelation. For the meaning of the words, *to present themselves before the Lord*, is that they exist as subject to His order in what He wills. Thus *Zechariah*, with reference to the *four chariots that go forth*,[11] says: *And the angel answered and said unto me: These are the four airs of the heavens, which go forth after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth.*[12] It is consequently manifest that the status of *the sons of God* and that of *Satan* in what exists are not identical. For *the sons of God* are more permanent and lasting, while [Satan] also has a certain portion, below them in what exists.

Furthermore one of the marvels of this parable consists in the fact that when it mentions that *Satan* roams especially[13] over the earth and accomplishes certain actions, it also makes clear that he is forbidden to gain dominion over the soul, that he has been given dominion over all terrestrial things, but that he is kept away by a barrier from the soul. This is the meaning of its saying: *Only spare his soul.*[14] I have already explained to you[15] that in our language the term *soul* is equivocal and that it is applied to the thing that remains of man after death; this is the thing over which *Satan* has no dominion.

After what I have mentioned, | hear the useful dictum of the *Sages* to whom the term *Sages* may truthfully be applied; it clarifies all that is obscure, reveals all that is concealed, and renders manifest most of the

9. Job 1:6; 2:1. 10. Job 2:1. 11. Zech. 6:1. 12. Zech. 6:5.
13. Or: only. 14. Job 2:6. 15. Cf. I 41.

mysteries of the Torah. It is their dictum in the *Talmud: Rabbi Simon ben Laqish said: Satan, the evil inclination, and the angel of death are one and the same.*[16] Thus he makes clear all that we have mentioned in a way that is not obscure for one who is endowed with understanding. It has thus become clear to you that these three terms designate one and the same notion and that all the actions attributed to each of these three are only the action of one and the same thing. This is also expressed literally by the ancient *Sages of the Mishnah,* who said: *This is taught: he descends and leads astray,* [*then*] *he ascends and accuses,* [*then*] *he takes permission and takes the soul.*[17] It is thus clear to you that what *David* saw *in a vision of prophecy* at the time of the plague, *having his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem,*[18] was only shown to him in order to indicate a certain notion. That same notion is also expressed *in the vision of prophecy* referring to the disobedience of the sons of *Joshua the high priest: And Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.*[19] Thereupon it is made clear in the following dictum how far [Satan] is from Him, may He be exalted: *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, yea, the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee.*[20] It was he who was seen also by *Balaam on the way in a vision of prophecy,* when he says to him:[21] *Behold, I am come forth for an adversary* [*satan*]. Know that the word *satan* derives from [the verb "satah," to turn away, figuring for instance in the verse]: *Steh* [*turn away*] *from it and pass on;*[22] I mean to say that it derives from the notion of turning-away and going-away. For it is he[23] who indubitably turns people away from the ways of truth and makes them perish in the ways of error. The same notion is expressed in the dictum: *For the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*[24] You know how well known this notion is in | our Law, I mean the notion of *good inclination and evil inclination;* and you know their dictum: *With both your inclinations.*[25] They also say that *the evil inclination* is produced in the human individual at his birth: *Sin coucheth at the door;*[26] as the *Torah* states literally: *From his youth.*[27] On the other hand, *good inclination* is only found

16. B.T., Baba Bathra, 16a. 17. B.T., Baba Bathra, 16a. 18. I Chron. 21:16.
19. Zech. 3:1. According to B.T., Sanhedrin, 91a, the verse refers to the sin committed by the sons of Joshua in taking non-Jewish women for wives.
20. Zech. 3:2. 21. To Balaam. Num. 22:32. 22. Prov. 4:15.
23. I.e., Satan. 24. Gen. 8:21.
25. Mishnah, Berakhoth, IX 5. The Mishnah passage interprets *thy heart* in Deut. 6:5 (*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*), as referring both to the good and the evil inclination. 26. Gen. 4:7.
27. Gen. 8:21. The whole biblical phrase may be translated (if one renders *yeṣer* by "inclination"): *For the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*

in man when his intellect is perfected.[28] That is why [the Sages] say[29] that in the parable that deals with the body of the human individual and the difference of its faculties and that figures in [Scripture's] dictum, *There was a little city, and few men within it, and so on,*[30] *the evil inclination* is called a *great king* and *good inclination* is called a *poor wise child.*[31] All these things are dealt with in well-known texts set down by [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed.* Now as they have explained to us that *the evil inclination* is *Satan,* who indubitably is an *angel*—I mean that he too is called an *angel* inasmuch as he is found in the crowd of *the sons of God*—*good inclination* must consequently also be truly an *angel.* Consequently that well-known opinion figuring in the sayings of the *Sages,*[32] *may their memory be blessed,* according to which every man is accompanied by *two angels,* one to his right and the other to his left, identifies these two with *good inclination* and *evil inclination.* In the *Gemara Shabbath,* they, *may their memory be blessed,* say clearly with regard to these *two angels* that *one is good and the other evil.*[33] See how many marvels are revealed to us by this dictum and how many incorrect imaginings it abolishes.

As I see it now, I have analyzed and explained the story of *Job* up to its ultimate end and conclusion. I want, however, to explain to you the opinion ascribed to *Job* and the opinion ascribed to each of his friends, using proofs that I gleaned from the discourse of each of them. You should not, however, pay attention to the other dicta rendered necessary by the order of the discourse, as I explained to you in the beginning of this Treatise.[34] |

CHAPTER 23

If it is supposed that the story of *Job* happened, the first thing that occurred was a matter on which there was general agreement between the five, I mean *Job* and his friends, namely, that everything that had befallen *Job* was known to Him, may He be exalted, and that God had caused these misfortunes to befall him. All of them were also agreed that injustice was not permitted to Him and wrongdoing not to be ascribed to Him. You will find these

28. Cf. Midrash Qoheleth, 9:14; B.T., Sanhedrin, 91b; Genesis Rabbah, XXXIV.
29. Cf. B.T., Nedarim, 32b. 30. Eccles. 9:14.
31. A great king is mentioned in Eccles. 9:14. Eccles. 9:15 speaks of a poor wise man. A poor wise child is mentioned in Eccles. 4:13.
32. Cf. B.T., Ḥagigah, 16a. Cf. B.T., Berakhoth, 60b, and Rashi's commentary.
33. B.T., Shabbath, 119b. 34. Cf. I Introduction.

notions frequently also in the discourse of *Job*. If now you consider the discourse of the five in the course of their conversation, you may almost think[1] that whatever one of them says is said also by all the others, so that the same notions are repeated and overlap. They are interrupted by *Job's* description of the sufferings and misfortunes that had befallen him in spite of his outstanding righteousness and by the description of his justice, the nobleness of his character, and the goodness of his actions. Similarly they are interrupted in the discourse of his friends by exhortations to patience, words of consolation, appeals to him to be amicable, and advice that he ought to be silent and not give rein to his speech like an individual quarreling with another individual; he should rather submit to God's judgments and be silent. He, on the other hand, says that the violence of the sufferings makes it impossible to be patient and firm and to say what one ought to. All his friends are also agreed that everyone who does good obtains a reward and that everyone who does evil is punished; and that if you see a disobedient man who is fortunate, in the end this state of affairs will be transformed into its contrary, for he will perish and misfortunes will befall him, his sons, and his offspring. If, however, you see an obedient man in misery, his fracture will certainly be remedied. You will find this notion repeated in the discourses of *Eliphaz*, *Bildad*, and *Zophar*, all three being agreed on this opinion. This, however, is not the purpose of | this story as a whole; for this purpose is rather to show the peculiarity of each of them and to make known each one's opinion concerning this story: namely, that the greatest and heaviest misfortunes befall the most perfect individual, who was the most unblemished of them in righteousness. *Job's* opinion on this is that this happening proves that the righteous man and the wicked are regarded as equal by Him, may He be exalted, because of His contempt for the human species and abandonment of it. This is what he says in all his speeches: *It is all one — therefore I say: He destroyeth the innocent and the wicked. If the flood*[2] *slay suddenly, He will mock at the calamity of the guiltless.*[3] He says thus that if a torrent comes suddenly killing all those it meets and sweeping them away, He laughs at the calamity of the innocent. Thereupon he confirms this opinion in his dictum: *One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His pails are full of milk, and so on. And another dieth in bitterness of soul, and hath never tasted of good. They lie down alike in the dust, and the worm covereth them.*[4] He also begins to cite as proof the good fortune and

1. Literally: find.
2. Maimonides apparently thus interprets the Hebrew word *shot*, which in this context probably means "scourge."
3. Job 9:22–23. 4. Job 21:23–26.

prosperity of the wicked, treating at great length of this subject. He says: *Even when I remember I am affrighted, and horror taketh hold on my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, wax mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight, and so on.*[5] Having described this perfect prosperity, he begins to say to his interlocutors: Even supposing matters are as you think and the children of the prosperous unbeliever perish after he is no more and their traces vanish, in what way is that prosperous man harmed by what happens to his family after he is no more? He says: *For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is determined?*[6] Thereupon he begins to make clear that there is no hope after death, and that nothing remains but neglect.[7] Accordingly he begins to wonder how it is that He has not neglected in the origin the work of the generation and the creation of the human individual and neglects to govern him. He says accordingly:[8] *Hast Thou not poured me out as milk, | and curdled me like cheese? and so on.*[9] This is one of the opinions believed in concerning providence. You know the dictum of the *Sages* that this opinion of *Job's* is most unsound. They say:[10] *May there be dust upon Job's mouth.* And they say: *Job wanted to upset the plate.* And they say: *Job denied the resurrection of the dead.* They also say of him: *He began to blaspheme.* With regard to His[11] saying, may He be exalted, to *Eliphaz: For ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath*[12]—the *Sages*, in order to find an excuse for it, say, *A man is not to be blamed for* [*what he does when*] *suffering*,[13] meaning that he was excused because of his great sufferings. However, this kind of speech does not accord with the parable.[14] The cause of this[15] is as we shall now explain to you. [Job] had given up his opinion, which was most mistaken, and had demonstrated that he had been mistaken therein. This view was such as arises at the first reflection and in the beginning thereof, especially in the case of one whom misfortunes have befallen, while he knows of himself that he had not sinned—which is not denied by anyone. For this reason this opinion is ascribed to *Job*. However, the latter said all that he did say as long as he had no true knowledge and knew the deity only because of his acceptance of authority, just as the multitude adhering to a Law know it. But when he knew God with a certain knowledge, he admitted that true happiness, which is the knowledge of the deity, is guaranteed to all who know Him and that a human being cannot be

5. Job 21:6–8. 6. Job 21:21. 7. On the part of God.
8. This refers to the formation of the fetus. 9. Job 10:10.
10. B.T., Baba Bathra, 16a. 11. I.e., God's. 12. Job 42:7.
13. B.T., Baba Bathra, 16b. 14. Literally: is not of the sort of the parable.
15. Of God's words to Eliphaz.

troubled in it by any of all the misfortunes in question. While he had known God only through the traditional stories and not by the way of speculation, *Job* had imagined that the things thought to be happiness,[16] such as health, wealth, and children, are the ultimate goal. For this reason he fell into such perplexity and said such things as he did. | This is the meaning of his dictum: *I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent of dust and ashes.*[17] This dictum may be supposed to mean, *Wherefore I abhor all that I used to desire and repent of my being in dust and ashes*—this being the position that he was supposed to be in: *And he sat among the ashes.*[18] It is because of this final discourse indicative of correct apprehension that it is said of him after this: *For ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath.*[19]

The opinion of *Eliphaz* concerning this event is also one of the opinions professed concerning providence. For he says that everything that befell *Job* was deserved by him, for he had committed sins because of which he served these misfortunes. This is what he says to *Job: Is not thy wickedness great? and are not thine iniquities without end?*[20] Then he began to tell *Job*: The righteousness of your actions and your excellent way of life upon which you relied do not entail your being perfect before God so that you should not be punished: *Behold, He putteth no trust in His servants, and His angels He chargeth with folly; how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust.*[21] *Eliphaz* does not cease turning around this notion; I mean to say that he believes that everything that befalls a man is deserved, but that the deficiencies for which we deserve punishment and the way in which we deserve to be punished because of them are hidden from our perception.

The opinion of *Bildad the Shuhite* on this question consists in the belief in compensation. For he says to *Job*: If you are innocent and have not sinned, the reason for these great events is to make great your reward. You will receive the finest of compensations. All this is good for you, so that the good that you will obtain in the end be increased. This is | what he says to *Job: If thou art pure and upright, surely now He will awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. And though thy beginning was small, yet thy end should greatly increase.*[22] You know already how well known this opinion on the subject of providence is, and we have already made it clear.

The opinion of *Zophar the Naamathite* is the one that considers that

16. Literally: the thought happinesses. 17. Job 42:5–6. 18. Job 2:8.
19. Job 42:7. 20. Job 22:5. 21. Job 4:18–19. 22. Job 8:6–7.

everything follows from the will[23] alone; no reason whatever should be sought for His actions, and the question should not be posed:[24] Why did He do this and why did He not do that? For this reason the point of view of justice or a requirement of wisdom should not be sought in whatever the deity does, for His greatness and true reality entail His doing what He wills. But we are incapable of penetrating the secrets of His wisdom, which necessitates His doing what He wills without there being another reason. This is what he says to *Job*:[25] *That God would speak, and open His lips against thee; and that He would tell thee the secrets of wisdom, that they may teach thee doubly.*[26] *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*

Know then and consider how the story, which has perplexed people, is composed and called upon them to adopt the various opinions that we have analyzed above concerning God's providence regarding the created things. All that is required by the classification[27] is mentioned and ascribed to one of the men famous at that time because of virtue and knowledge. That would have to be said if this is a parable. Or they might have expressed these opinions in true reality if this is a story that has happened. The opinion attributed to *Job* is in keeping with the opinion of Aristotle; the opinion of *Eliphaz* is in keeping with the opinion of our Law; the opinion of *Bildad* is in keeping with the doctrine of the Muʿtazila; the opinion of *Zophar* is in keeping with the doctrine of the Ashʿariyya. These were the ancient opinions concerning providence.

Thereupon another opinion supervenes, namely, the one attributed to *Elihu*. Hence he is considered by them[28] as superior.[29] For it is mentioned that he was the youngest among them in point of age and the most perfect among them in knowledge. He started to reprove *Job* and to tax him with ignorance | because of his having manifested his self-esteem and because of his not being able to understand how misfortunes could have befallen him though he performed good deeds. For he had expatiated at length on the goodness of his actions. He also described the opinions of [Job's] three friends on providence as senile drivel; and made extraordinary speeches that are full of enigmas, in such a way that if someone considers his discourse, he wonders

23. Of God. 24. Literally: it should not be said. 25. Job 11:5–7.
26. The following words are omitted: *Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.*
27. Of the opinions. 28. By Job and his three friends.
29. Or, according to manuscript variants: He is considered superior to them; or: He is distinguished from them.

and thinks that he[30] does not in any respect make an addition to what was said by *Eliphaz*, *Bildad*, and *Zophar*, but merely repeats in different terms and with amplifications the notions contained in their speeches. For he does not go beyond blaming *Job*, ascribing the attribute of justice to God, describing His wonders in the universe, and stating that He, may He be exalted, does not care either for the obedience of those who obey or for the disobedience of those who disobey. Now all these notions had been expressed by his companions. However, when you consider the matter, the additional notion that he introduced will become clear to you; this notion is the one that is intended;[31] it had not occurred before to one of the others. Together with that notion, however, he says all they have said, just as each of all the others – namely, *Job and his three friends* – repeats, as I have mentioned to you, the notion expressed by another among them. This is done in order to hide the notion that is peculiar to the opinion of each individual, so that at first it occurs to the multitude that all the interlocuters are agreed upon the selfsame opinion; however, this is not so. The notion added by *Elihu* and not mentioned by one of them is that which he expresses parabolically when he speaks of the intercession of an angel. For he says that it is an attested and well-known thing that when a man is ill to the point of death and when he is despaired of, if an angel intercedes for him – regardless of what angel – his intercession is accepted and he is raised from his fall. This invalid is accordingly saved and restored to the best of states. However, this does not continue always, there being no continuous intercession | going on forever, for it only takes place two or three times. He says: *If there be for him an angel, an intercessor, and so on.*[32] And, having described the various states of the convalescent and his joy at returning to the perfection of health, he says: *Lo, all these things doth God work, twice, yea thrice, with a man.*[33] This notion is made clear by *Elihu* alone. He also makes an addition – prior to speaking of this notion – by beginning to describe the how of prophecy in his dictum: *For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet [man] perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men.*[34] Thereupon he begins to confirm this opinion and to make clear its method by describing many natural circumstances, such as his describing thunder, lightning, rain, and the blowing of the winds. He combines this with many subjects belonging to the circumstances of animals – I mean an outbreak of pestilence referred to in his dictum, *In a moment they die, even at midnight, and so on;*[35] the occurrence of great wars referred to in his dictum, *He breaketh in pieces*

30. I.e., Elihu. 31. By the author of the book. 32. Job 33:23.
33. Job 33:29. 34. Job 33:14–15. 35. Job 34:20.

mighty men without number, and setteth others in their stead;[36] and many other such circumstances.

Similarly you will find that in the prophetic revelation that came to *Job*[37] and through which his error in everything that he had imagined became clear to him, there is no going beyond the description of natural matters – namely, description of the elements or description of the meteorological phenomena or description of the natures of the various species of animals, but of nothing else. For what is mentioned therein in the way of a description of the *firmaments* and the *heavens*[38] and *Orion* and *the Pleiades*[39] occur because of their influence upon the atmosphere; for He draws his[40] attention only to what is beneath the sphere of the moon. *Elihu* too derives his warnings from various species of animals. For he says:[41] *He teacheth us from the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wise from the fowls of heaven.*[42] In this speech[43] He dwells at the greatest length on a description of *Leviathan*, who is a combination of corporeal properties divided between the animals that walk, swim, and fly. | The purpose of all these things is to show that our intellects do not reach the point of apprehending how these natural things that exist in the world of generation and corruption are produced in time and of conceiving how the existence of the natural force within them has originated them. They[44] are not things that resemble what we make. How then can we wish that His governance of, and providence for, them, may He be exalted, should resemble our governance of, and providence for, the things we do govern and provide for? Rather is it obligatory to stop at this point and to believe that nothing is hidden from Him, may He be exalted. As *Elihu* here says: *For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*[45] But the notion of His providence is not the same as the notion of our providence; nor is the notion of His governance of the things created by Him the same as the notion of our governance of that which we govern. The two notions are not comprised in one definition, contrary to what is thought by all those who are confused, and there is nothing in common between the two except the name alone. In the same way, our act does not resemble His act; and the two are not comprised in one and

36. Job 34:24. 37. Cf. Job 38–42. 38. Cf. Job 38:37. 39. Cf. Job 38:31.
40. I.e., Job's. 41. Job 35:11.
42. This seems to be, by and large, the meaning of the verse as understood by Maimonides. However, the translation figuring in the English translation of the Bible may be more correct. It reads: *Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.*
43. Of God. 44. Or: it (i.e., the natural force). 45. Job 34:21–22.

the same definition. Just as natural acts differ from those of craftsmanship, so do the divine governance of, the divine providence for, and the divine purpose with regard to, those natural matters differ from our human governance of, providence for, and purpose with regard to, the things we govern, we provide for, and we purpose. This is the object of the *Book of Job* as a whole; I refer to the establishing of this foundation for the belief and the drawing attention to the inference to be drawn from natural matters, so that you should not fall into error and seek to affirm in your imagination that His knowledge is like our knowledge or that His purpose and His providence and His governance are like our purpose and our providence and our governance. If man knows this, every misfortune will be borne lightly by him. | And misfortunes will not add to his doubts regarding the deity and whether He does or does not know and whether He exercises providence or manifests neglect, but will, on the contrary, add to his love, as is said in the conclusion of the prophetic revelation in question: *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent of dust and ashes.*[46] As [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, have said: *Those who do out of love and are joyful in sufferings.*[47] If you meditate upon everything I have told you with the attention that ought to be practiced in meditating upon this Treatise and if you consider this *Book of Job*, its meaning will become clear to you; and you will find that I have summed up all its notions, nothing being left aside except such matters as figure there because of the arrangement of the discourse and the continuation of the parables, according to what I have explained to you several times in this Treatise.

CHAPTER 24

The subject of *trial* is also very difficult; it is one of the greatest difficulties of the Law. The *Torah* mentions it in six passages, as I shall make clear to you in this chapter. What is generally accepted among people regarding the subject of *trial* is this: God sends down calamities upon an individual, without their having been preceded by a sin, in order that his reward be increased. However, this principle is not at all mentioned in the *Torah* in an

46. Job 42:6. This is Maimonides' interpretation of the verse, whose latter part is translated in the English Bible: *and repent, seeing I am dust and ashes.*
47. B.T., Shabbath, 88b.

explicit text. And there is in the *Torah* only one passage among the six whose external meaning suggests such a notion; I shall explain its meaning. The principle of the Law that runs counter to this opinion, is that contained in His dictum, may He be exalted: *A God of faithfulness and without iniquity*.[1] Nor do all the *Sages* profess this opinion of the multitude, for they say sometimes: *There is no death without sin and no sufferings without transgression*.[2] And this is the opinion | that ought to be believed by every adherent of the Law who is endowed with intellect, for he should not ascribe injustice to God, may He be exalted above this, so that he believes that Zayd is innocent of sin and is perfect and that he does not deserve what befell him. However, the external meaning of the *trials* mentioned in the *Torah* in the passages in question is that they took place in order to test and to receive information so that one could know the degree of faith or the degree of obedience of the individual or nation in question. And this is the great difficulty, especially in the story of the *binding*,[3] which was known only to God and to the two individuals involved, to one of whom[4] it was said: *For now I know that thou fearest God*.[5] It is the same with regard to its dictum: *For the Lord your God tries you out, to know whether ye do love the Lord, and so on*.[6] And also with regard to its dictum: *To know what was in thy heart, and so on*.[7] Now I will resolve all these difficulties for you.

Know that the aim and meaning of all the *trials* mentioned in the *Torah* is to let people know what they ought to do or what they must believe. Accordingly the notion of a *trial* consists as it were in a certain act being done, the purpose being not the accomplishment of that particular act, but the latter's being a model to be imitated and followed. Thus the interpretation of its dictum — *To know whether ye do love*[8] — is not: in order that God should know that, for He already knew it; but the meaning resembles that of its dictum — *To know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you*[9] — the meaning of which is: in order that the religious communities should know. In the same manner [Scripture] says:[10] If a man claiming prophecy arise and if you see his suggestions tend to make one believe in the truth of his claim, know that God wished to make known hereby to the religious communities the extent of your certitude with regard to His Law, may He be exalted, and your apprehension of its[11] true reality; and also to make known that you do not let yourselves be deceived by the deceptions of a deceiver and

1. Deut. 32:4. 2. B.T., Shabbath, 55a. 3. I.e., of the sacrifice of Isaac.
4. Literally: to him (i.e., to Abraham). 5. Gen. 22:12. 6. Deut. 13:4.
7. Deut. 8:2. 8. Deut. 13:4. 9. Exod. 31:13. 10. Cf. Deut. 13:2 ff.
11. Or: His.

that your faith in God cannot be disturbed. | This will be a support for everyone who seeks the truth, for he will seek out the beliefs that are so firm that when one has them one pays no attention to the man who tries to compete through working a miracle. For this man issues a call to believe in impossible things, whereas a competition as to miracles is only useful[12] when something possible is claimed, as we have made clear in *Mishneh Torah*.[13]

After it has been made clear that the meaning of *to know* here is: in order that people should know, the same can be said with regard to its dictum concerning *manna: That He might afflict thee, to try thee out, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no*.[14] The meaning of this is: in order that the religious communities should know this and that it should be generally accepted throughout the world that those who wholly devote themselves to His service, may He be exalted, are provided by Him with food in an unthought-of way. The same notion is expressed when *manna* is spoken of on the occasion when it first came down: *That I may try them out, whether they will walk in My Torah, or no;*[15] which means: in order that everyone should consider this and should see whether being devoted to His service is useful and sufficient or not sufficient. As for what is said [in Scripture] for the third time again concerning *manna* — namely, *Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might afflict thee, and that He might try thee out* [*nasotekha*], *to do thee good at thy latter end*[16] — it may suggest that God sometimes makes an individual suffer in order that his reward be greater. But this is not the truth of the matter. For this dictum has one of two meanings: One of them is the notion concerning *manna* repeatedly expressed in the first and second dictum, namely: in order that it should be known whether being devoted to God does or does not suffice as far as food is concerned and gives relief from fatigue and weariness. Or *nasotekha* [*try thee out*] may mean: to accustom thee, this being an interpretation that can refer to its dictum: *is not accustomed* [*nisstah*] *to set the sole of her foot, and so on*.[17] It is as if it said that He, may He be exalted, has first accustomed you to misery in the desert in order to make your well-being greater when once you came into the land.[18] And this is true, for to pass from weariness to rest is more pleasant than to be constantly at rest. And it is known that | but for their misery and weariness in the desert, they would not have been able to conquer the land and to fight. The *Torah* literally states this: *For God said: Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people*

12. Or: instructive. 13. Cf. Yesodei ha-Torah, VIII. 14. Deut. 8:2.
15. Exod. 16:4. 16. Deut. 8:16. 17. Deut. 28:56. 18. I.e., into Palestine.

about, by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.[19] For prosperity does away with courage, whereas a hard life and fatigue necessarily produce courage—this being the *good* that, according to the story in question, will come *at their latter end.*[20]

As for its dictum, *For God is come to try you out,*[21] it expresses the same notion as the one stated in *Deuteronomy*[22] concerning a man claiming *to prophesy in the name of an idol: For the Lord your God tries you out,*[23] the meaning of which we have made clear. He told them similarly here at the *Gathering at Mount Sinai:* Be not afraid; this great gathering that you have seen has taken place only in order that you acquire certitude through sight, so that if, in order to make publicly known the extent of your faith, *the Lord your God tried you out with a false prophet* who would call upon you to demolish what you have heard, you should remain firm and keep your feet from stumbling. For if I had come to you as a prophet,[24] as you had thought,[25] and I had said to you what had been said to me without your hearing it for yourselves, it would have been possible for you to fancy that what is told by another[26] is true even if that other had come to you with something contradicting what has been made known to you; this is what could have happened if you had not heard it at this gathering.

As for the story of *Abraham* at the *binding,*[27] it contains two great notions that are fundamental principles of the Law. One of these notions consists in our being informed of the limit of *love* for God, may He be exalted, and *fear* of Him—that is, up to what limit they must reach. For in in this story he was ordered to do something that bears no comparison either with sacrifice of property or with sacrifice of life. In truth it is the most extraordinary thing that could happen in the world, such a thing that one would not imagine that human nature was capable of it. Here there | is a sterile man having an exceeding desire for a son, possessed of great property and commanding respect, and having the wish that his progeny should become a religious community. When a son comes to him after his having lost hope, how great will be his attachment to him and love for him! However, because of his fear of Him, who should be exalted, and because of his

19. Exod. 13:17–18. 20. Deut. 8:16. 21. Exod. 20:17.
22. The term used here by Maimonides is *Mishneh Torah,* which is both an alternate name of the fifth book of the Pentateuch and the title of Maimonides' legal compilation. Cf. II 31, n. 3, and II 34, n. 2 and 4.
23. Deut. 13:4.
24. *rasūl.* Etymologically the word means "envoy." In Moslem theology it is often applied to such prophets as are also lawgivers (in contradistinction to other prophets).
25. Cf. Exod. 20:16. 26. Literally: what is in the hand of another.
27. Of Isaac.

love to carry out His command, he holds this beloved son as little, gives up all his hopes regarding him, and hastens to slaughter him after a journey of days. For if he had chosen to do this immediately, as soon as the order came to him, it would have been an act of stupefaction and disturbance in the absence of exhaustive reflection. But his doing it days after the command had come to him shows that the act sprang from thought, correct understanding, consideration of the truth of His command, may He be exalted, love of Him, and fear of Him. No other circumstance should be put forward, nor should one opt for the notion that he was in a state of passion. For *Abraham our Father* did not hasten to slaughter *Isaac* because he was afraid that God would kill him or make him poor, but solely because of what is incumbent upon the Adamites – namely, to love Him and fear Him, may He be exalted – and not, as we have explained in several passages, for any hope of a reward or for fear of punishment. Accordingly the *angel* said to him: *For now I know that thou fearest God:*[28] meaning that through the act because of which the term *fearing God* is applied to you, all the Adamites will know what the limits of *the fear of the Lord* are. Know that this notion is corroborated and explained in the *Torah*, in which it is mentioned that the final end of the whole of the *Torah*, including its commandments, prohibitions, promises, and narratives, is one thing only – namely, fear of Him, may He be exalted. This is referred to in its dictum: *If thou wilt not take care to observe all the words of this Law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and awful Name, and so on.*[29] This is one of the two notions aimed at | in the *binding*.[30]

The second notion consists in making known to us the fact that the prophets consider as true that which comes to them from God in a prophetic revelation. For it should not be thought that what they hear or what appears to them in a parable is not certain or is commingled with illusion just because it comes about *in a dream and in a vision*, as we have made clear, and through the intermediary of the imaginative faculty. Accordingly [Scripture] wished to make it known to us that all that is seen by a prophet in *a vision of prophecy* is, in the opinion of the prophet, a certain truth, that the prophet has no doubts in any way concerning anything in it, and that in his opinion its status is the same as that of all existent things that are apprehended through the senses or through the intellect. A proof for this is the fact that [Abraham] hastened to slaughter, as he had been commanded, *his son, his only son, whom he loved*,[31] even though this command came to him *in a dream* or *in a vision*. For if a dream of prophecy had been obscure for the

28. Gen. 22:12. 29. Deut. 28:58. 30. Of Isaac. 31. Cf. Gen. 22:2.

prophets, or if they had doubts or incertitude concerning what they apprehended *in a vision of prophecy*, they would not have hastened to do that which is repugnant to nature, and [Abraham's] soul would not have consented to accomplish an act of so great an importance if there had been *a doubt* about it.

In truth it was fitting that this story, I mean the *binding*, should come to pass through the hand of *Abraham* and in regard to someone like *Isaac*. For *Abraham our Father* was the first to make known the belief in Unity, to establish prophecy, and to perpetuate this opinion and draw people to it. It says: *For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and judgment.*[32] Thus just as they followed his correct and useful opinions, namely, those that were heard from him, so ought one to follow the opinions deriving from his actions and especially from this action through which he validated the fundamental principle affirming the truth of prophecy and made known to us the ultimate end toward which *the fear and love of God* may reach.

It is in this way that | the meaning of *trials* should be understood. And it should not be believed that God, may He be exalted, wants to test and try out a thing in order to know that which He did not know before. How greatly is He exalted above that which is imagined by ignorant fools in their evil thoughts! Know this.

CHAPTER 25

The actions are divided with regard to their ends into four classes: futile actions, frivolous actions, vain actions, or good and excellent actions. The action that is called vain is that by which its agent aims at some end and that end is not achieved, its achievement being hindered by obstacles. You can often hear people saying: "I tired myself in vain," on an occasion when he tired himself in seeking an individual without finding him, or when he tired himself in the course of a journey without obtaining a profit in trade. It is also said: "Our effort with this sick man was vain," when health is not obtained. The same holds for all actions in which ends are sought, and those ends are not achieved. A futile action is that action by which no end is

32. Gen. 18:19.

aimed at at all, as when some people play with their hands while thinking and as the actions of the negligent and the inattentive. A frivolous action is that action by which a low end is aimed at; I mean to say that something unnecessary and not very useful is aimed at therein, as when one dances not for exercise or as when one does things in order to make people laugh about those things. Such actions are indubitably called frivolous, but they differ according to the purposes | and the perfection of the agents. For there are many things that are necessary or very useful according to some people, whereas according to others they are not at all needed; as is the case with regard to the different kinds of bodily exercise, which are necessary for the preservation of health according to the prescriptions of those who know the art of medicine, and as is the case with regard to writing, which is very useful according to the men of knowledge. Thus those who accomplish acts exercising their body in the wish to be healthy, engaging in ball games, wrestling, boxing, and suspension of breathing, or those who engage in actions that are done with a view to writing, as for instance the cutting of reed pens and the making of paper, are in the opinion of the ignorant engaged in frivolous actions, whereas they are not frivolous according to the learned. The good and excellent action is that accomplished by an agent aiming at a noble end, I mean one that is necessary or useful, and achieves that end. This is a division against which, as it seems to me, no objection can be made at any point. For one who accomplishes a certain action in all cases either aims or does not aim thereby at some end. Again an end aimed at is in all cases either noble or low, and is either achieved or not. And this is what is necessarily required by the division.

After having explained this, I shall say: A man endowed with intellect is incapable of saying that any action of God is vain, futile, or frivolous. According to our opinion—that is, that of all of us who follow the Law of *Moses our Master*—all His actions are good and excellent. He says: *And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.*[1] Consequently everything that He, may He be exalted, has done for the sake of a thing is necessary for the existence of the thing aimed at or is very useful. For instance, the nourishment of a living being is necessary for its preservation, and the existence of its two eyes | is very useful for its preservation. In fact nourishment is exclusively intended to preserve the living being alive for a certain time, and the senses are exclusively intended with a view to the utility of the sensorial apprehensions for the living being. The philosophic opinion is similar, holding as it does that in all natural things

1. Gen. 1:31.

there is nothing that may be described as futile; I mean to say that everything that is not artificial consists in actions through which some end is sought, regardless of whether we do or do not know that end.

As for that sect among the people of speculation that holds that God does not do a thing because of another and that there are no causes and no effects, but that all His actions correspond to His will so that one should not seek an end for them or say: Why did He do this? as He does what He wills, and as this[2] is not consequent upon wisdom—the actions of God are considered by these people as falling under the class of the futile or held to be even inferior to futile actions. For someone performing a futile action does not aim at an end and is careless of what he does; whereas God, according to these people, knows and intends what He does, but does it without any end whatsoever or without any utility.

That anything among His actions, may He be exalted, should be frivolous is impossible, as is manifest as soon as one thinks of it. No attention should be paid to the ravings of those who deem that the ape was created in order that man should laugh at it. What led to all this was ignorance of the nature of coming-to-be and passing-away and neglect of the fundamental principle: namely, that the entire purpose consists in bringing into existence the way you see it everything whose existence is possible; for His wisdom did not require in any way that it should be otherwise; for this is impossible, since matters take their course in accordance with what His wisdom requires.

As for those who say that no end is intended in any of the acts of God, they were led | to this by necessity, namely, by considering the totality of what exists in accordance with their opinion. For they say: What is the end of the existence of the world as a whole? Hence they assert of necessity what everyone asserts who maintains that the world was created in time: He willed it so, there being no other cause. Thereupon they proceed to apply this assertion to all the particular things in the world. They go so far as not to concede that the hole in the uvea and the transparency of the cornea exist for the sake of letting the visual spirit pass so that it might apprehend, and do not even regard this at all as a cause of sight. According to them it was not for the sake of sight that this membrane was perforated and the one above it made transparent, but He willed it so, even though sight would be possible if things were otherwise. We have some texts whose external sense might be fancied to suggest this meaning at the first glance. For instance his saying: *Whatsoever the Lord willed, that hath He done, and so on*;[3] and for instance

2. I.e., God's actions. 3. Ps. 135:6.

his saying: *And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth;*[4] and for instance his saying: *And who may say unto him, What doest thou?*[5] The meaning of these texts and of others of the same kind is that the things willed by God are necessarily accomplished, there being no obstacle to hinder the carrying-out of His volition; but that He, may He be exalted, wills only what is possible, and not everything that is possible, but only that which is required by His wisdom to be such. Similarly no obstacle intervenes between Him, may He be exalted, and the exceedingly excellent action that He wishes to accomplish, and nothing can hinder it. This is the opinion of all those that adhere to the Law and also the opinion of the philosophers, and it is also our own opinion. For while we believe that the world has been produced in time, none of our scholars and none of our men of knowledge believe that this came about through the will and nothing else. For they say that His wisdom, may He be exalted—the apprehension of which is beyond us—obligatorily necessitated the existence of this world as a whole at the moment when it came into existence, and that | the selfsame immutable wisdom necessitated nonexistence before the world came into existence. You will find this notion frequently repeated by the *Sages* when they interpret the verse:[6] *He hath made every thing beautiful in its time.*[7] All this was meant to avoid that which should be avoided: namely, the thought that the agent[8] may accomplish an act whereby he does not aim at any end at all. Such is the belief of the multitude of the men of knowledge in our Law, and this was explicitly stated by our prophets: namely, that the particulars of natural acts are all well arranged and ordered and bound up with one another, all of them being causes and effects; and that none of them is futile or frivolous or vain, being acts of perfect wisdom, as it says: *How manifold are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.*[9] And it is said: *And all His works are done in faithfulness.*[10] And it is said: *The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, and so on.*[11] This opinion occurs frequently; and the opposite ought not to be believed. Philosophic speculation similarly requires that there should not be anything futile, frivolous, or vain in all the acts of nature, and all the more in the nature of the spheres, for they are better arranged and ordered because of the nobility of their matter.

Know that the majority of the false imaginings that call forth perplexity in the quest for the end of the existence of the world as a whole or the end of every part of it have as their root an error of man about himself and his

4. Job 23:13. 5. Eccles. 8:4. 6. Eccles. 3:11.
7. Cf. Genesis Rabbah, IX; Midrash Qoheleth, 3:11. 8. I.e., in this context, God.
9. Ps. 104:24. 10. Ps. 33:4. 11. Prov. 3:19.

imagining that all that exists exists because of himself alone, as well as ignorance of the nature of inferior matter and ignorance of what is primarily intended – namely, the bringing into being of everything whose existence is possible, existence being indubitably a good. It is because of this error and of the ignorance of these two notions that the doubts and the perplexity arise, so that some of God's actions are imagined to be frivolous, others futile, and others vain. Know that those who | put up with this incongruity so that His acts, may He be exalted, became in their opinion like futile acts that aim at no end at all, abhorred making His acts consequent upon wisdom in order that this should not pass into the assertion maintaining the eternity of the world; accordingly they shut the door upon this opinion. However, I have already made known to you the opinion of our Law about this and the fact that this opinion ought to be believed. For there is no incongruity in our saying that the existence and nonexistence of all these acts are consequent upon His wisdom, may He be exalted; we, however, are ignorant of many of the ways in which wisdom is found in His works. It is upon this opinion that the whole of *the Torah of Moses our Master* is founded; it opens with it: *And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good;*[12] and it concludes with it: *The Rock, His work is perfect, and so on.*[13] Know this. If you consider this opinion and the philosophic opinion, reflecting upon all the preceding chapters in this Treatise that are connected with this notion, you will not find any difference between them regarding any of the particulars of everything that exists.[14] You will find no difference other than that which we have explained: namely, that they regard the world as eternal and we regard it as produced in time. Understand this.

CHAPTER 26

Just as there is disagreement among the men of speculation among the adherents of Law whether His works, may He be exalted, are consequent upon wisdom or upon the will alone without being intended toward any end at all, there is also the same disagreement among them regarding our Laws, which He has given to us. Thus there are people who do not seek for them | any cause at all, saying that all Laws are consequent upon the will alone. There are also people who say that every commandment and prohibition in

12. Gen. 1:31. 13. Deut. 32:4. 14. Literally: of existence.

these Laws is consequent upon wisdom and aims at some end, and that all Laws have causes and were given in view of some utility. It is, however, the doctrine of all of us – both of the multitude and of the elite – that all the Laws have a cause, though we ignore the causes for some of them and we do not know the manner in which they conform to wisdom. With regard to this the texts of the Book are clear: *righteous statutes* [*ḥuqqim*] *and judgments;*[1] *The judgments of the Lord are true, they are righteous altogether.*[2]

About the statutes designated as *ḥuqqim*[3] – for instance those concerning the *mingled stuff*, *meat in milk*, and *the sending of the goat*[4] – [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, make literally the following statement: *Things which I have prescribed for you, about which you have not the permission to think, which are criticized by Satan and refuted by the Gentiles.*[5] They are not believed by the multitude of the *Sages* to be things for which there is no cause at all and for which one must not seek an end. For this would lead, according to what we have explained, to their being considered as futile actions. On the contrary, the multitude of the *Sages* believe that there indubitably is a cause for them – I mean to say a useful end – but that it is hidden from us either because of the incapacity of our intellects or the deficiency of our knowledge. Consequently there is, in their opinion, a cause for all the *commandments;* I mean to say that any particular commandment or prohibition has a useful end. In the case of some of them, it is clear to us in what way they are useful – as in the case of the prohibition of killing and stealing. In the case of others, their utility is not clear – as in the case of the interdiction of the *first products*[6] [of trees] and of [sowing] *the vineyard with diverse seeds.*[7] Those commandments whose utility is clear to the multitude are called *mishpatim* [*judgments*], and those whose utility is not clear to the multitude are called *ḥuqqim* [*statutes*]. They[8] always say with regard to the verse: *For it is no vain thing*[9] – *And if it is vain, it is because of you;*[10] meaning that this legislation is not | a vain matter without a useful end and that if it seems to you that this is the case with regard to some of the *commandments*, the deficiency resides in your apprehension. You already know the tradition that is widespread among us according to which the causes for all the *commandments*, with the exception of that concerning the *red heifer*,

1. Deut. 4:8. 2. Ps. 19:10.
3. This Hebrew term is sometimes interpreted as designating those religious laws that have no (or no obvious) explanation in terms of human reason. Cf. below in this chapter.
4. Cf. Deut. 22:11; Exod. 23:19; Lev. 16:10 and 21. 5. B.T., Yoma, 67b.
6. Literally: *foreskin*. Cf. Lev. 19:23. 7. Cf. Deut. 22:9.
8. I.e., the talmudic Sages. 9. Deut. 32:47.
10. J.T., Pe'ah, I; J.T., Kethuboth. VIII.

were known to *Solomon;*[11] and also their dictum[12] that God hid the causes for the *commandments* in order that they should not be held in little esteem, as happened to *Solomon* with regard to the three *commandments* whose causes are made clear.[13]

All their dicta proceed according to this principle, and the texts of the [scriptural] books indicate it. However, I found in *Bereshith Rabbah* a text of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* from which it appears when one first reflects on it that some of the *commandments* have no other cause than merely to prescribe a law, without there having been in view in them any other end or any real utility. This is their dictum in that passage:[14] *What does it matter to the Holy One, blessed be He, that animals are slaughtered by cutting their neck in front or in the back? Say therefore that the commandments were only given in order to purify the people. For it is said: The word of the Lord is purified.*[15] Though this dictum is very strange and has no parallel in their other dicta, I have interpreted it, as you will hear, in such a manner that we shall not abandon the views of all their dicta and we shall not disagree with a universally agreed upon principle, namely, that one should seek in all the Laws an end that is useful in regard to being: *For it is no vain thing.*[16] He says: *I said not unto the seed of Jacob: Seek ye Me for nothing; I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.*[17]

What everyone endowed with a sound intellect ought to believe on this subject is what I shall set forth to you: The generalities of the *commandments* necessarily have a cause and have been given because of a certain utility; their details are that in regard to which it was said of the commandments that they were given merely for the sake of commanding something. | For instance the killing of animals because of the necessity of having good food is manifestly useful, as we shall make clear.[18] But the prescription that they should be killed through having the upper and not the lower part of their throat cut, and having their esophagus and windpipe severed at one particular place is, like other prescriptions of the same kind, imposed with a view *to purifying the people.* The same thing is made clear to you through their example: *Slaughtered by cutting their neck in front or in the back.* I have mentioned this example to you merely because one finds in their text, *may their memory be blessed: Slaughtered by cutting their neck in front or in the back.* However, if one studies the truth of the matter, one finds it to be as follows: As necessity occasions the eating of animals, the

11. Cf. Midrash Qoheleth, 7:23. 12. Cf. B.T., Sanhedrin, 21b.
13. Cf. Deut. 17:16–17. 14. Genesis Rabbah, XLIV *ab init.* 15. Ps. 18:31.
16. Deut. 32:47. 17. Isa. 45:19. 18. Cf. III 48.

commandment was intended to bring about the easiest death in an easy manner. For beheading would only be possible with the help of a sword or something similar, whereas a throat can be cut with anything. In order that death should come about more easily, the condition was imposed that the knife should be sharp. The true reality of particulars of commandments is illustrated by the sacrifices. The offering of sacrifices has in itself a great and manifest utility, as I shall make clear.[19] But no cause will ever be found for the fact that one particular sacrifice consists in a *lamb* and another in a *ram* and that the number of the victims should be one particular number. Accordingly, in my opinion, all those who occupy themselves with finding causes for something of these particulars are stricken with a prolonged madness in the course of which they do not put an end to an incongruity, but rather increase the number of incongruities. Those who imagine that a cause may be found for suchlike things are as far from truth as those who imagine that the generalities of a *commandment* are not designed with a view to some real utility.

Know that wisdom rendered it necessary—or, if you will, say that necessity occasioned—that there should be particulars for which no cause can be found; it was, as it were, impossible in regard to the Law that there should be nothing of this class in it. In such a case the impossibility is due to the circumstances that when you ask why a *lamb* should be prescribed and not a *ram*, the same question would have to be asked if a *ram* had been prescribed | instead of a *lamb*. But one particular species had necessarily to be chosen. The same holds for your asking why *seven lambs* and not *eight* have been prescribed. For a similar question would have been put if *eight* or *ten* or *twenty* had been prescribed. However, one particular number had necessarily to be chosen. This resembles the nature of the possible, for it is certain that one of the possibilities will come to pass. And no question should be put why one particular possibility and not another comes to pass, for a similar question would become necessary if another possibility instead of this particular one had come to pass. Know this notion and grasp it. The constant statements of [the Sages] to the effect that there are causes for all the commandments, as well as the opinion that the causes were known to *Solomon*, have in view the utility of a given *commandment* in a general way, not an examination of its particulars.

This being so, I have seen fit to divide the *six hundred and thirteen commandments* into a number of classes, every one of which comprises a number of *commandments* belonging to one kind or akin in meaning. I shall inform

19. Cf. III 46.

you of the cause of every one of these classes, and I shall show their utility about which there can be no doubt and to which there can be no objection. Then I shall return to each of the *commandments* comprised in the class in question and I shall explain to you the cause of it, so that only very few *commandments* will remain whose cause has not been clear to me up to now. Some of the particulars of, and conditions for, some of the *commandments* have also become clear to me, and it is possible to give their causes. You will hear all this. However, I shall not be able to clarify to you all this giving of causes before I set before you, as a preliminary, a number of chapters in which I will include premises that are useful as an introduction for the purpose I have in mind. These are the chapters with which I will begin now. |

CHAPTER 27

The Law as a whole aims at two things: the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body. As for the welfare of the soul, it consists in the multitude's acquiring correct opinions corresponding to their respective capacity. Therefore some of them [namely, the opinions] are set forth explicitly and some of them are set forth in parables. For it is not within the nature of the common multitude that its capacity should suffice for apprehending that subject matter as it is. As for the welfare of the body, it comes about by the improvement of their ways of living one with another. This is achieved through two things. One of them is the abolition of their wronging each other. This is tantamount to every individual among the people not being permitted to act according to his will and up to the limits of his power, but being forced to do that which is useful to the whole. The second thing consists in the acquisition by every human individual of moral qualities that are useful for life in society so that the affairs of the city may be ordered. Know that as between these two aims, one is indubitably greater in nobility, namely, the welfare of the soul—I mean the procuring of correct opinions—while the second aim—I mean the welfare of the body—is prior in nature and time. The latter aim consists in the governance of the city and the well-being of the states of all its people according to their capacity. This second aim is the more certain one, and it is the one regarding which every effort has been made precisely to expound it and all its particulars. For the first aim can only be achieved after achieving this second one. For it has already

been demonstrated that man has two perfections: a first perfection, which is the perfection of the body, and an ultimate perfection, which is the perfection of the soul. The first perfection | consists in being healthy and in the very best bodily state, and this is only possible through his finding the things necessary for him whenever he seeks them. These are his food and all the other things needed for the governance of his body, such as a shelter, bathing, and so forth. This cannot be achieved in any way by one isolated individual. For an individual can only attain all this through a political association, it being already known that man is political by nature. His ultimate perfection is to become rational in actu, I mean to have an intellect in actu; this would consist in his knowing everything concerning all the beings that it is within the capacity of man to know in accordance with his ultimate perfection. It is clear that to this ultimate perfection there do not belong either actions or moral qualities and that it consists only of opinions toward which speculation has led and that investigation has rendered compulsory. It is also clear that this noble and ultimate perfection can only be achieved after the first perfection has been achieved. For a man cannot represent to himself an intelligible even when taught to understand it and all the more cannot become aware of it of his own accord, if he is in pain or is very hungry or is thirsty or is hot or is very cold. But once the first perfection has been achieved it is possible to achieve the ultimate, which is indubitably more noble and is the only cause of permanent preservation.

The true Law then, which as we have already made clear[1] is unique—namely, the Law of *Moses our Master*—has come to bring us both perfections, I mean the welfare of the states of people in their relations with one another through the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing and through the acquisition of a noble and excellent character. In this way the preservation of the population of the country and their permanent existence in the same order become possible, so that | every one of them achieves his first perfection; I mean also the soundness of the beliefs and the giving of correct opinions through which ultimate perfection is achieved. The letter of the *Torah* speaks of both perfections and informs us that the end of this Law in its entirety is the achievement of these two perfections. For He, may He be exalted, says: *And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes* [*huqqim*], *to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day*.[2] Here He puts the ultimate perfection first because of its nobility; for, as we have explained, it is the ultimate end. It is referred to in the dictum: *For our good always*. You know already what [the Sages],

1. Cf. II 39. 2. Deut. 6:24.

may their memory be blessed, have said interpreting His dictum, may He be exalted: *That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.*[3] They said: *That it may be well with thee in a world in which everything is well and that thou mayest prolong thy days in a world the whole of which is long.*[4] Similarly the intention of His dictum here, *For our good always*, is this same notion: I mean the attainment of *a world in which everything is well and* [*the whole of which is*] *long*. And this is perpetual preservation. On the other hand, His dictum, *That He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day*, refers to the first and corporeal preservation, which lasts for a certain duration and which can only be well ordered through political association, as we have explained.

CHAPTER 28

Among the things to which your attention ought to be directed is that you should know that in regard to the correct opinions through which the ultimate perfection may be obtained, the Law has communicated only their end and made a call to believe in them in a summary way – that is, to believe in the existence of the deity, may He be exalted, His unity, His knowledge, His power, His will, and His eternity. All these points are ultimate ends, which can be made clear | in detail and through definitions only after one knows many opinions. In the same way the Law also makes a call to adopt certain beliefs, belief in which is necessary for the sake of political welfare. Such, for instance, is our belief that He, may He be exalted, is violently angry with those who disobey Him and that it is therefore necessary to fear Him and to dread Him and to take care not to disobey. With regard to all the other correct opinions concerning the whole of being – opinions that constitute the numerous kinds of all the theoretical sciences through which the opinions forming the ultimate end are validated – the Law, albeit it does not make a call to direct attention toward them in detail as it does with regard to [the opinions forming ultimate ends], does do this in summary fashion by saying: *To love the Lord.*[1] You know how this is confirmed in the dictum regarding *love: With all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*[2] We have already explained in *Mishneh Torah*[3] that this *love* becomes valid only through the apprehension of the whole of being as it is

3. Deut. 22:7. 4. B.T., Qiddushin, 39b; B.T., Ḥullin, 142a.
1. Deut. 11:13 and 22; 19:9; 30:6, 16, and 20.
2. Deut. 6:5. 3. Cf. Yesodei ha-Torah, II 2 f.

and through the consideration of His wisdom as it is manifested in it. We have also mentioned there the fact that the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, call attention to this notion.

What results from what we have now stated as a premise regarding this subject is that whenever a *commandment*, be it a prescription or a prohibition, requires abolishing reciprocal wrongdoing, or urging to a noble moral quality leading to a good social relationship, or communicating a correct opinion that ought to be believed either on account of itself or because it is necessary for the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing or for the acquisition of a noble moral quality, such a *commandment* has a clear cause and is of a manifest utility. No question concerning the end need be posed with regard to such *commandments*. For no one was ever so perplexed for a day as to ask why we were commanded by the Law that God is one, or why we were forbidden | to kill and to steal, or why we were forbidden to exercise vengeance and retaliation, or why we were ordered to love each other. The matters about which people are perplexed and opinions disagree—so that some say that there is no utility in them at all except the fact of mere command, whereas others say that there is a utility in them that is hidden from us—are the *commandments* from whose external meaning it does not appear that they are useful according to one of the three notions we have mentioned: I mean to say that they neither communicate an opinion nor inculcate a noble quality nor abolish reciprocal wrongdoing. Apparently these *commandments* are not related to the welfare of the soul, as they do not communicate a belief, or to the welfare of the body, as they do not communicate rules useful for the governance of the city or for the governance of the household. Such, for instance, are the prohibitions of the *mingled stuff*, of the *mingling* [of diverse species], and of *meat in milk*,[4] and the commandment *concerning the covering of blood, the heifer whose neck was broken*, and the *firstling of an ass*,[5] and others of the same kind. However, you will hear my explanation for all of them and my exposition of the correct and demonstrated causes for them all with the sole exception—as I have mentioned to you—of details and particular *commandments*. I shall explain that all these and others of the same kind are indubitably related to one of the three notions referred to—either to the welfare of a belief or to the welfare of the conditions of the city, which is achieved through two things: abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing and acquisition of excellent characters.

Sum up what we have said concerning beliefs as follows: In some cases

4. Cf. Deut. 22:11; Lev. 19:19; Exod. 23:19.
5. Cf. Lev. 17:13; Deut. 21:1–9; Exod. 13:13.

a *commandment* communicates a correct belief, which is the one and only thing aimed at – as, for instance, the belief in the unity and eternity of the deity and in His not being a body. In other cases the belief is necessary for the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing or for the acquisition of a noble moral quality – as, for instance, the belief that He, may He be exalted, has a violent anger against those who do injustice, according to what is said: *And My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill, and so on*,[6] and as the belief that He, may He be exalted, | responds instantaneously to the prayer of someone wronged or deceived: *And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto Me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.*[7]

CHAPTER 29

It is well known that *Abraham our Father*, peace be on him, was brought up in the religious community of the Sabians,[1] whose doctrine it is that there is no deity but the stars. When I shall have made known to you in this chapter their books, translated into Arabic, which are in our hands today, and their ancient chronicles and I shall have revealed to you through them their doctrine and histories, it will become clear to you from this that they explicitly asserted that the stars are the deity and that the sun is the greatest deity. They also said that the rest of the seven stars[2] are deities, but that the two luminaries[3] are the greatest of them. You will find that they explicitly say that the sun governs the upper and the lower world. They say it in these very terms. And you will find that they mention in those books and those chronicles the story of *Abraham our Father*, and they say literally what follows: When Ibrahīm, who was brought up in Kūthā, disagreed with the community and asserted that there was an agent other than the sun, various arguments were brought forward against him. In these arguments they[4] set forth the clear and manifest activities of the sun in what exists. Thereupon he, they mean *Abraham*, told them: You are right; it is like an axe in the hands of a carpenter. Then they mention a part of his

6. Exod. 22:23. 7. Exod. 22:26.
1. The term "Sabians," as used by Maimonides, designates the pagans.
2. Including the sun and the moon. Another possible translation is: all the seven stars.
3. The sun and the moon. 4. I.e., the Sabians who were Abraham's contemporaries.

argumentation, peace be on him, against them. At the conclusion of the story they mention that the king put *Abraham our Father*, may peace be upon him, into prison, and that, being in prison, he persevered | for days and days in arguing against them. Thereupon the king became afraid that he would ruin his[5] polity and turn the people away from their religions and banished him toward Syria after having confiscated all his property. This is what they relate. You will find this story set forth in this manner in "The Nabatean Agriculture."[6] They do not mention what is related in our true traditions, and the prophetic revelation that came to him. For they tax him with lying because of his disagreeing with their corrupt opinion. I have no doubt that in view of the fact that he, may peace be upon him, disagreed with the doctrine of all men, these erring men reviled, blamed, and belittled him. Accordingly, because he bore this for the sake of God, may He be exalted, and preferred truth to his reputation, he was told: *And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*[7] And in point of fact his activity has resulted, as we see today, in the consensus of the greater part of the population of the earth in glorifying him and considering themselves as blessed through his memory, so that even those who do not belong to his progeny pretend to descend from him. No one is antagonistic to him or ignorant of his greatness except the remnants of this religious community that has perished, remnants that survive in the extremities of the earth, as for instance the infidels among the Turks in the extreme North and the Hindus in the extreme South. These are the remnants of the religious community of the Sabians, for this was a religious community that extended over the whole earth.

The utmost attained by the speculation of those who philosophized in those times consisted in imagining that God was the spirit of the sphere and that the sphere and the stars are a body of which the deity, may He be exalted, is its spirit. Abū Bakr Ibn al-Ṣā'igh[8] has mentioned this in the commentary on the "Akroasis."[9] Therefore all the Sabians believed in the eternity of the world, since in their opinion heaven is the deity.

They deem *Adam* to have been an individual born of male | and female like the other human individuals, but they glorify him and say that he was a prophet, the envoy[10] of the moon, who called people to worship the moon, and that there are compilations of his on the cultivation of the soil. Similarly the Sabians say that *Noah* was a cultivator of the soil and that he did not

5. I.e., the king's. 6. A supposedly ancient Sabian book. Cf. this chapter below.
7. Gen. 12:3. 8. Ibn Bājja. Cf. I 74, n. 10. 9. I.e., Aristotle's *Physics*.
10. Or: prophetic lawgiver.

approve of the worship of idols. Therefore you will find that all the Sabians blame *Noah* and say that he never worshipped an idol. They also mention in their books that he was beaten and put into prison because of his worshipping God, and tell various other tales about him. They deem that *Seth* disagreed with the opinion of his father *Adam* concerning the worship of the moon, and tell most ridiculous lies that show a great deficiency of intellect and that they are more remote from philosophy than any other men and are extremely ignorant. Of *Adam* they say that when he left the clime of the sun, which is in the vicinity of India, and came to the clime of Babylon, he brought with him marvellous things: among them a golden tree that grew and had leaves and branches, also a stone tree, and a green leaf of a tree that fire could not burn. And he spoke of a tree, of a man's stature in height, that could given shelter to ten thousand men. He also brought with him two leaves in each of which two individuals could be wrapped. They also tell fables about other marvels. It is to be wondered at that people who think that the world is eternal should at the same time believe in these things that are impossible in nature for those who have knowledge of the speculation on nature. Their purpose in mentioning *Adam* and everything they ascribe to him is to fortify their doctrine concerning the eternity of the world so that it should follow that the stars and the sphere are the deity.

However, when *the pillar of the world*[11] grew up and it became clear to him that there is a separate deity that is neither a body nor a force in a body and that all the stars | and the spheres were made by Him, and he understood that the fables upon which he was brought up were absurd, he began to refute their doctrine and to show up their opinions as false; he publicly manifested his disagreement with them and called *in the name of the Lord, God of the world*[12]—both the existence of the deity and the creation of the world in time by that deity being comprised in that call.

In conformity with these opinions, the Sabians set up statues for the planets,[13] golden statues for the sun and silver ones for the moon, and distributed the minerals and the climes between the planets, saying that one particular planet was the deity of one particular clime. And they built temples, set up the statues in them, and thought that the forces of the planets overflowed toward these statues and that consequently these statues talked, had understanding, gave prophetic revelation to people—I mean, the statues—and made known to people what was useful to them. Similarly they

11. I.e., Abraham. 12. Gen. 21:33. Cf. II 13, n. 4.
13. *kawākib*. Literally: stars. In the following lines this Arabic term is rendered several times as "planets."

said of the trees, which were assigned to the various planets, that when one particular tree was set apart for one particular planet, planted with a view to the latter, and a certain treatment was applied to it and with it, the spirit of that planet overflowed toward that tree, gave prophetic revelation to people, and spoke to them in sleep. You will find all this set forth literally in their books, to which I shall draw your attention. These were *the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Asherah* that are mentioned in our texts; among them these opinions became so firm that they *they forsook the Lord*[14] and called: *O Baal, answer us.*[15] All this came about because of these opinions being generally accepted, ignorance being widespread and the world then often being given to raving concerning imaginings of this kind. Accordingly such opinions developed among them that some of them became *soothsayers, enchanters, sorcerers, charmers, consulters with familiar spirits, wizards, and necromancers.*[16] We have already made it clear in our great compilation, | *Mishneh Torah,*[17] that *Abraham our Father* began to refute these opinions by means of arguments and feeble preaching, conciliating people and drawing them to obedience by means of benefits. Then the Master of the prophets[18] received prophetic inspiration; thereupon he perfected the purpose in that he commanded killing these people, wiping out their traces, and tearing out their roots: *Ye shall break down their altars, and so on,*[19] and forbade following those ways of theirs in anything: *And ye shall not walk in the customs* [*ḥuqqoth*] *of the nation, and so on.*[20] You know from texts of the *Torah* figuring in a number of passages that the first intention of the Law as a whole is to put an end to *idolatry*, to wipe out its traces and all that is bound up with it, even its memory as well as all that leads to any of its works – as, for instance, *familar spirits* and a *wizard* and *making to pass through fire, a diviner, a soothsayer, an enchanter, a sorcerer, a charmer, and a necromancer* – and to warn against doing anything at all similar to their works and, all the more, against repeating the latter. It is explicitly stated in the text of the *Torah* that everything that was regarded by them as worship of their gods and as a way of coming near to them, is hateful and odious to God. This is stated in His saying: *For every abomination to the Lord, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods.*[21] You will find that in their books, about which I shall give you information, they mention that under certain circumstances they offer to the sun, their highest deity, seven beetles, seven mice, and seven bats. This alone is sufficient to arouse

14. Cf. Isa. 1:4. 15. I Kings 18:26. 16. Cf. Deut. 18:10–11.
17. Cf. ʿAbodah Zarah, I 3. 18. I.e., Moses.
19. Judg. 2:2. Cf. Exod. 34:13; Deut. 7:5. 20. Lev. 20:23. 21. Deut. 12:31.

disgust in human nature. Consequently all the *commandments* that are concerned with the prohibition against *idolatry* and everything that is connected with it or leads toward it or may be ascribed to it, are of manifest utility, for all of them are meant to bring about deliverance from these unhealthy opinions that turn one's attention away from all that is useful with regard to the two perfections toward the crazy notions | in which our fathers and forefathers were brought up: *Your fathers dwelt of old time on the other side of the river, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods.*[22] It is about these notions that the truthful prophets have said:[23] *For they walked after vain things that do not profit.* How great then is the utility of every *commandment* that delivers us from this great error and brings us back to the correct belief: namely, that there is a deity who is the Creator of all this; that it is He who ought to be worshipped and loved and feared and not the things that are deemed to be gods; and that to come near to this true deity and to obtain His good will, nothing is required that is fraught with any hardship whatever, the only things needed being *love of Him and fear of Him* and nothing else. For these two are, as we shall explain, the end of divine worship: *And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, and so on.*[24] We shall exhaust this subject in the sequel.

I shall now return to my purpose and say that the meaning of many of the laws became clear to me and their causes became known to me through my study of the doctrines, opinions, practices, and cult of the Sabians, as you will hear when I explain the reasons for the *commandments* that are considered to be without cause. I shall mention to you the books from which all that I know about the doctrines and opinions of the Sabians will become clear to you so that you will know for certain that what I say about the reasons for these laws is correct.

The most important book about this subject is "The Nabatean Agriculture" translated by Ibn Waḥshiyya.[25] In a future chapter I shall let you know why the Sabians treated their doctrines and agriculture in the same work. This book is filled with the ravings of the *idolaters* and with notions to which the souls of the vulgar incline and by which they are captivated—I mean the actions | of talismans, practices with a view to causing spirits to descend, demons, and ghouls living in deserts. In this book are also included

22. Josh. 24:2.
23. The following quotation amalgamates two passages: I Sam.12:21, and Jer. 2:8.
24. Deut. 10:12.
25. Abū Bakr Aḥmad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn Waḥshiyya seems to have been the author of this work, which he passed off as a translation from the Chaldean. The work appeared in 904.

extraordinary ravings laughed at by the intelligent, which are thought to depreciate the manifest miracles through which the people of the earth know that there is a deity governing the people of the earth; as it says: *That thou mayest know that the earth is the Lord's*;[26] and: *That I am the Lord in the midst of the earth.*[27] Accordingly it is related there about *Adam, the first* man, that he recounts in his book that in India there is a tree whose branches, if taken and thrown on the earth, move, crawling as snakes do; and also that there is another tree there whose root has a human form; this root may be heard to growl and to emit isolated words. He also narrates that if a man take a leaf of an herb, whose description is given, and puts it against his breast,[28] he becomes hidden from people and is not seen wherever he comes in or goes out. If this herb is used in fumigations under the open sky, people hear a sound and fearsome voices in the atmosphere while the smoke rises. There are many such fables in the book, told in the course of setting forth information about marvels in plants and the properties of agriculture; in this way the miracles are criticized and the suggestion made that they are worked by means of tricks. In one of the fables figuring in that book, it is mentioned that an althea bush, which was one of the *asheroth*[29] that they used, as I have let you know, remained for twelve thousand years in *Nineveh*; that it quarreled with a mandragora because of the latter's wanting to take its place; that the individual who used to receive prophetic revelation from that tree was deprived of that revelation for a while. After that interval of time, it informed him by such a revelation | that it had been preoccupied with the quarrel with the mandragora and ordered him to write to the Chaldeans asking them to judge between them and to pronounce which of them — the althea or the mandragora — was better for, and more frequently utilized in, their magic. This is a long fable, from which, if you examine it, you may draw inferences concerning the intellect and the sciences of the people of those times. Such were the *Sages of Babylon* that are referred to in those dark times. For these were the religious beliefs upon which they were brought up. If the belief in the existence of the deity were not generally accepted at present to such an extent in the religious communities, our days in these times would be even darker than that epoch. However, their darkness is of different kinds. I am, however, returning to our subject.

In that book it is related that an individual from among the *prophets of idolatry*, named *Tammuz*, called upon a king to worship the seven

26. Exod. 9:29. 27. Exod. 8:18. 28. Or: in his pocket.
29. A biblical Hebrew word that Maimonides applies to trees that have been consecrated to gods.

planets[30] and the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Thereupon that king killed him in an abominable manner. It is narrated that on the night of his death all the statues from the various countries of the earth assembled in the temple in Babylon, near the great golden statue, which was the statue of the sun. This statue was suspended between heaven and earth. And it came to a stop in the middle of the temple, while all the other statues surrounded it. Then it began to eulogize *Tammuz* and to relate what had happened to him, and all the statues wept and lamented during the whole of the night. In the morning, however, the statues flew away and returned to their temples in the various countries of the earth. And this became an enduring traditional custom to lament and weep over *Tammuz* on the first day of the month of *Tammuz*. The women weep over him and eulogize him. Consider then and understand and see what were the opinions of the people in those times. For this | story of *Tammuz* is very ancient among the Sabians. And from this book you will understand most of the ravings, practices, and festivals of the Sabians.

As for the story they tell about *Adam* and the *serpent and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, a story that also alludes to unusual clothing, take great care not to be confused in your intellect in such a way as to have the notion that what they say is a thing that has ever happened to *Adam* or to somebody else. For it is by no means a story concerning something real. With very little reflection it will become clear to you that all that they set forth in this fable is absurd and that it is a story that they put out after the promulgation of the *Torah*. For when the *Torah* had become generally known among the religious communities[31] and they[32] had heard the external meaning of the *Account of the Beginning*, taking the whole of it according to its external meaning, they concocted this story in order that inexperienced people should listen to it and be so deceived as to think that the world is eternal and that the story described in the *Torah* happened the way they tell it. Even though a man like you does not have to have his attention drawn to this point—as you have already acquired such sciences as will prevent your mind from becoming attached to the fables of the Sabians and the ravings of the Chasdeans and Chaldeans who are devoid of all science that is truly a science—I have warned against this in order to safeguard others, for the multitude frequently incline to regarding fables as the truth.

Among these books there is also the book of al-Ustumākhus that is ascribed to Aristotle,[33] but he cannot have written it; also books concerning

30. Literally: stars. 31. Or: nations. 32. I.e., the Sabians.
33. This pseudo-Aristotelian work exists in manuscript.

talismans like the book of Tumtum, the book al Sarb, and the Book of the Degrees of the Sphere and the Forms Appearing in Each of These Degrees; also a book concerning talismans that is likewise attributed to Aristotle, a book | ascribed to Hermes, and the book written by Isḥāq al-Ṣābi on the defense of the religious community of the Sabians, and the big book of this same author concerning the laws of the Sabians, the details of their religion, their festivals, their sacrifices, their prayers, and other matters belonging to their religion. All the books that I have mentioned to you are *books of idolatry* that have been translated into Arabic. But there is no doubt that they are but a very small part of this literature if compared to the writings that have not been translated and are not even extant, but have perished and been lost in the course of the years. However, the books extant among us today contain an exposition of the greatest part of the opinions and the practices of the Sabians; some of the latter are generally known at present in the world. I mean the building of temples, the setting-up in them of images made of cast metal and stone, the building of altars and the offering-up upon them of either animal sacrifices or various kinds of food, the institution of festivals, the gatherings for prayer and for various kinds of worship in those temples in which they locate highly venerated places that are called by them the temple of the intellectual forms, as well as the setting-up of images *upon the high mountains, and so on*,[34] the veneration of those *asheroth*,[35] the setting-up of *monumental stones*, and other matters of which you will learn in the books to which I have drawn your attention. The knowledge of these opinions and practices is a very important chapter in the exposition of the reasons for the *commandments*. For the foundation of the whole of our Law and the pivot around which it turns, consists in the effacement of these opinions from the minds and of these monuments from existence. With respect to their effacement from the minds, it says: *Lest your heart be deceived, and so on*;[36] *Whose heart turneth away this day, and so on*;[37] and with respect to their effacement from existence, it says: *Ye shall break down their altars . . . and hew down their groves, and so on*;[38] *And destroy their name out of that place*.[39] | These two purposes are reiterated in a number of passages. For this is the first intention extending over the whole of the Law, as is made known to us by [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, in their transmitted commentary on His dictum, may He be exalted: *Even all that the Lord hath commanded you by the hand of Moses*.[40] For they say:

34. Deut. 12:2. 35. Cf. n. 29, this chap. 36. Deut. 11:16.
37. Deut. 29:17. 38. Deut. 7:5. 39. Deut. 12:3. 40. Num. 15:23.

Herefrom you may learn that everyone who professes idolatry, disbelieves in the Torah in its entirety; whereas he who disbelieves in idolatry, professes the Torah in its entirety.[41] Cognize this.

CHAPTER 30

When you consider these ancient and unhealthy opinions, it will become clear to you that among all men it was an accepted view that through the worship of stars the earth becomes populated and the soil fertile. Their men of knowledge, as well as the ascetics and the men of piety among them, preached this to the people and taught them that agriculture, on which the existence of man depends, can only be perfected and succeed according to wish if you worship the sun and the stars; if you anger them through disobedience, the land will become barren and devastated. In their books they say that Jupiter had been angry with the wildernesses and the deserts and that they therefore lacked water and lacked trees and were inhabited by ghouls. They had a very great esteem for the peasants and the cultivators of the soil because of their being engaged in cultivating the earth, an occupation that conforms to the will of the stars and pleases them. The reason why the *idolators* had a great esteem for oxen was the utility of the latter in agriculture. They even said that it was not permitted to kill them because force was joined in them | to handiness for man in agriculture; the oxen only acted thus and submitted to man in spite of their force because the gods were pleased with their work in agriculture. Inasmuch as these opinions were generally accepted, [the idolaters] connected *idolatry* with agriculture, the latter being necessary for the subsistence of man and of most animals. Accordingly *the priests of idolatry* preached to the people during their assemblies in the temples and fortified in their minds the notion that through the practices of this cult, rains would fall, the trees would bear fruit, and the land would become fertile and populous. Consider what they say in "The Nabatean Agriculture"[1] in the passage on the vineyard; you will find there the following text of the Sabians: All the ancient sages have said and the prophets have commanded and prescribed to play on musical

41. Siphre to Num. 15:23; B.T., Horayoth, 8a; B.T., Qiddushin, 40a. The subject is dealt with by Maimonides in *Mishneh Torah*, ʿAbodah Zarah, II 4.

1. This work is referred to in the preceding chapter.

instruments before the statues during festivals. They said – and they were truthful – that the gods were pleased with this and accorded the best reward to those who acted thus. They multiplied the promises concerning this – promising, that is, a prolongation of life, a warding-off of calamities, the disappearance of infirmities, the fertility of the sowing, and the thriving of the fruits. The text of the Sabians continues up to here.

Now inasmuch as these notions were generally accepted so that they were regarded as certain, and as God, may He be exalted, wished in His pity for us to efface this error from our minds and to take away fatigue from our bodies through the abolition of these tiring and useless practices and to give us Laws through the instrumentality of *Moses our Master*, the latter informed us in His name, may He be exalted, that if the stars and the planets were worshipped, their worship would be a cause for the rain ceasing to fall, for the land being devastated | and producing nothing, for the fruit of the trees falling off, for misfortunes attending circumstances, for infirmities befalling the bodies, and for a shortening of lives. These are the intentions of *the words of the covenant, which the Lord made, and so on.*[2] You will find that this intention is reiterated in the whole of the *Torah:* I mean that it is a necessary consequence of the worship of the stars that rains will cease to fall, that the land will be devastated, that circumstances will become bad, that the bodies will suffer from diseases, and that lives will be short; whereas a necessary consequence of the abandonment of their worship and the adoption of the worship of God will be rainfall, the fertility of the land, good circumstances, health of the body, and length of life. This is the contrary of what was preached by the *idolaters* to the people in order that they worship idols. For the foundation of the Law consists in putting an end to this opinion and effacing its traces, as we have explained.

CHAPTER 31

There is a group of human beings who consider it a grievous thing that causes should be given for any law; what would please them most is that the intellect would not find a meaning for the commandments and prohibitions. What compels them to feel thus is a sickness that they find in their souls, a sickness to which they are unable to give utterance and of

2. Deut. 28:69. The quotation is not exact.

which they cannot furnish a satisfactory account. For they think that if those laws were useful in this existence and had been given to us for this or that reason, it would be as if they derived from the reflection and the understanding of some intelligent being. If, however, there is a thing for which the intellect could not find any meaning at all and that does not lead to something useful, it indubitably derives from God; for the reflection of man would not lead to such a thing. It is as if, | according to these people of weak intellects, man were more perfect than his Maker; for man speaks and acts in a manner that leads to some intended end, whereas the deity does not act thus, but commands us to do things that are not useful to us and forbids us to do things that are not harmful to us. But He is far exalted above this; the contrary is the case – the whole purpose consisting in what is useful for us, as we have explained[1] on the basis of its dictum: *For our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.*[2] And it says: *Which shall hear all these statutes* [*ḥuqqim*] *and say: Surely this great community is a wise and understanding people.*[3] Thus it states explicitly that even all the *statutes* [*ḥuqqim*][4] will show to all the nations that they have been given with *wisdom and understanding*. Now if there is a thing for which no reason is known and that does not either procure something useful or ward off something harmful, why should one say of one who believes in it or practices it that he is *wise and understanding* and of great worth? And why should the religious communities think it a wonder? Rather things are indubitably as we have mentioned: every *commandment* from among these *six hundred and thirteen commandments* exists either with a view to communicating a correct opinion, or to putting an end to an unhealthy opinion, or to communicating a rule of justice, or to warding off an injustice, or to endowing men with a noble moral quality, or to warning them against an evil moral quality. Thus all [the commandments] are bound up with three things: opinions, moral qualities, and political civic actions. We do not count speeches as one of these things since the speeches that the Law enjoins or forbids belong in part to the class of civic actions, and in part are meant to cause opinions, and in part are meant to cause moral qualities. Therefore we have limited ourselves here, in giving reasons for every law, to these three classes. |

1. Cf. III 27. 2. Deut. 6:24. 3. Deut. 4:6. 4. Cf. III 26, n. 3.

CHAPTER 32

If you consider the divine actions—I mean to say the natural actions—the deity's wily graciousness and wisdom, as shown in the creation of living beings, in the gradation of the motions of the limbs, and the proximity of some of the latter to others, will through them[1] become clear to you. Similarly His wisdom and wily graciousness, as shown in the gradual succession of the various states of the whole individual, will become clear to you. The brain is an example of the gradation of the motions and the proximity of the limbs of an individual: for its front part is soft, very soft indeed, whereas its posterior part is more solid. The spinal marrow is even more solid and becomes more and more solid as it stretches on. The nerves are organs of sensation and of motion. Accordingly the nerves required only for apprehension by the senses or for motion that presents but little difficulty, like the motions of the eyelids and of the jaws, proceed from the brain, whereas the motions required for moving the limbs proceed from the spinal marrow. As, however, it is impossible for a nerve, in view of its softness—even for a nerve proceeding from the spinal marrow—to move an articulation, the matter was wilily and graciously arranged as follows: the nerves are ramified into fibers, and the latter, having been filled with flesh, become muscles. Thereupon the nerve, having overpassed the extremity of the muscle, having become more solid, and having been commingled with fragments of ligaments, becomes a tendon. The tendon joins and adheres to the bone; and thereupon, because of this gradation, the nerve is capable of moving a limb. I mentioned only this one example to you because it is the most obvious of the wonders explained in the treatise "On the Utilities of the Parts of the Body,"[2] all of which wonders are clear, manifest, and well known to those who consider them with a penetrating mind. Similarly the deity made a wily and gracious arrangement | with regard to all the individuals of the living beings that suck.[3] For when born, such individuals are extremely soft and cannot feed on dry food. Accordingly breasts were prepared for them so that they should produce milk with a view to their receiving humid food, which is similar to the composition of their bodies, until their limbs gradually and little by little become dry and solid.

Many things in our Law are due to something similar to this very governance on the part of Him who governs, may He be glorified and

1. I.e., through the above-mentioned actions.
2. Cf. Galen *De usu partium humani corporis* i.17; ii.3.
3. I.e., the mammals.

exalted. For a sudden transition from one opposite to another is impossible. And therefore man, according to his nature, is not capable of abandoning suddenly all to which he was accustomed. As therefore God sent *Moses our Master* to make out of us *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*[4]—through the knowledge of Him, may He be exalted, accordingly to what He has explained, saying: *Unto thee it was shown that thou mightest know, and so on;*[5] *Know this day, and lay it to thy heart, and so on*[6]—so that we should devote ourselves to His worship according to what He said: *And to serve Him with all your heart,*[7] and: *And ye shall serve the Lord your God,*[8] and: *And Him shall ye serve;*[9] and as at that time the way of life generally accepted and customary in the whole world and the universal service upon which we were brought up consisted in offering various species of living beings in the temples in which images were set up, in worshipping the latter, and in burning incense before them—the pious ones and the ascetics being at that time, as we have explained, the people who were devoted to the service of the temples consecrated to the stars— : His wisdom, may He be exalted, and His gracious ruse, which is manifest in regard to all His creatures, did not require that He give us a Law prescribing the rejection, abandonment, and abolition of all these kinds of worship. For one could not then conceive the acceptance of [such a Law], considering the nature of man, which always likes that | to which it is accustomed. At that time this would have been similar to the appearance of a prophet in these times who, calling upon the people to worship God, would say: "God has given you a Law forbidding you to pray to Him, to fast, to call upon Him for help in misfortune. Your worship should consist solely in meditation without any works at all." Therefore He, may He be exalted, suffered the above-mentioned kinds of worship to remain, but transferred them from created or imaginary and unreal things to His own name, may He be exalted, commanding us to practice them with regard to Him, may He be exalted. Thus He commanded us to build a temple for Him: *And let them make Me a Sanctuary;*[10] to have an altar for His name: *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me;*[11] to have the sacrifice offered up to Him: *When any man of you bringeth an offering unto the Lord;*[12] to bow down in worship before Him; and to burn incense before Him. And He forbade the performance of any of these actions with a view to someone else: *He that sacrificeth unto the gods shall be utterly*

4. Exod. 19:6. 5. Deut. 4:35. 6. Deut. 4:39. 7. Deut. 11:13.
8. Exod. 23:25. 9. Deut. 13:5. 10. Exod. 25:8.
11. Exod. 20:24 (v. 21 in some translations). 12. Lev. 1:2.

destroyed, and so on;[13] *For thou shalt bow down to no other god.*[14] And he singled out *Priests* for the service of the *Sanctuary*, saying: *That they may minister unto Me in the priest's office.*[15] And because of their employment in the temple[16] and the sacrifices in it, it was necessary to fix for them dues that would be sufficient for them; namely, the dues of the *Levites* and the *Priests*. Through this divine ruse it came about that the memory of *idolatry* was effaced and that the grandest and true foundation of our belief – namely, the existence and oneness of the deity – was firmly established, while at the same time the souls had no feeling of repugnance and were not repelled because of the abolition of modes of worship to which they were accustomed and than which no other mode of worship was known at that time.

I know that on thinking about this at first your soul will necessarily have a feeling of repugnance toward this notion and will feel aggrieved because of it; and you will ask me in your heart and say to me: How is it possible that none of the commandments, prohibitions, and great actions – which are very precisely set forth and prescribed for fixed seasons – should be intended for its own sake, but for the sake of something else, as if this were a ruse | invented for our benefit by God in order to achieve His first intention? What was there to prevent Him, may He be exalted, from giving us a Law in accordance with His first intention[17] and from procuring us the capacity to accept this? In this way there would have been no need for the things that you consider to be due to a second intention. Hear then the reply to your question that will put an end to this sickness in your heart and reveal to you the true reality of that to which I have drawn your attention. It is to the effect that the text of the *Torah* tells a quite similar story, namely, in its dictum: *God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although it was near, and so on. But God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.*[18] Just as God perplexed them in anticipation of what their bodies were naturally incapable of bearing – turning them away from the high road toward which they had been going, toward another road so that the first intention should be achieved – so did He in anticipation of what the soul is naturally incapable of receiving, prescribe the laws that we have mentioned so that the first intention should be achieved, namely, the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, and the rejection of *idolatry*. For just as it is not in the nature of man that, after having been

13. Exod. 22:19. The entire verse reads: *He that sacrificeth unto the gods, save unto the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed.*
14. Exod. 34:14. 15. Exod. 28:41. 16. Literally: house.
17. Or: from revealing His first intention. 18. Exod. 13:17–18.

brought up in slavish service occupied with clay, bricks, and similar things, he should all of a sudden wash off from his hands the dirt deriving from them and proceed immediately to fight against *the children of Anak*,[19] so is it also not in his nature that, after having been brought up upon very many modes of worship and of customary practices, which the souls find so agreeable that they become as it were a primary notion,[20] he should abandon them all of a sudden. And just as the deity used a gracious ruse in causing them to wander perplexedly in the desert until their souls became courageous – it being well known that life in the desert and lack of comforts for the body necessarily develop courage whereas the opposite circumstances necessarily develop cowardice – and until, moreover, people were born who were not | accustomed to humiliation and servitude – all this having been brought about by[21] *Moses our Master* by means of divine commandments: *At the commandment of the Lord they encamped, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses*[22] – so did this group of laws derive from a divine grace, so that they should be left with the kind of practices to which they were accustomed and so that consequently the belief, which constitutes the first intention, should be validated[23] in them.

As for your question: What was there to prevent God from giving us a Law in accordance with His first intention[24] and from procuring us the capacity to accept this? – you lay yourself open to an inference from this second question. For one may say to you: What was there to prevent God from making them march *by the way of the land of the Philistines* and procuring them the capacity to engage in wars so that there should be no need for this roundabout way with *the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night?*[25] Also you lay yourself open to a third question as an inference, a question regarding the reason for the detailing of promises and threats with regard to the whole Law. One may say to you: Inasmuch as God's first intention and His will are that we should believe in this Law and that we should perform the actions prescribed by it, why did He not procure us the capacity always to accept this intention and to act in accordance with it, instead of using a ruse with regard to us, declaring that He will procure us benefits if we obey Him and will take vengeance on us if we disobey Him and performing in deed all these acts of benefiting and all these acts of vengeance? For this too is a ruse used by Him with regard to us in order to

19. Cf. Num. 13:28. 20. Or: intelligible. 21. Or: through the instrumentality of.
22. Num. 9:23. 23. *yaṣuḥḥu*, the word used, may mean "to be correct" or "to be in a good state," "to be valid."
24. Or: from revealing to us His first intention. 25. Exod. 13:22.

achieve His first intention with respect to us. What was there to prevent Him from causing the inclination to accomplish the acts of obedience willed by Him and to avoid the acts of disobedience abhorred by Him, to be a natural disposition fixed in us?

There is one and the same general answer to all these three questions and to all the others that belong to the same class: Though all miracles change the nature of some individual being, | God does not change at all the nature of human individuals by means of miracles. Because of this great principle it says: *O that they had such an heart as this, and so on.*[26] It is because of this that there are commandments and prohibitions, rewards and punishments. We have already explained this fundamental principle by giving its proofs in a number of passages in our compilations. We do not say this because we believe that the changing of the nature of any human individual is difficult for Him, may He be exalted. Rather is it possible and fully within capacity.[27] But according to the foundations of the Law, of the Torah, He has never willed to do it, nor shall He ever will it. For if it were His will that the nature of any human individual should be changed because of what He, may He be exalted, wills from that individual, sending of prophets and all giving of a Law would have been useless.

I return to my subject and I say that, as this kind of worship – I mean the *sacrifices* – pertain to a second intention, whereas invocation, prayer, and similar practices and modes of worship come closer to the first intention and are necessary for its achievement, a great difference has been made[28] between the two kinds. For one kind of worship – I mean the offering of sacrifices – even though it was done in His name, may He be exalted, was not prescribed to us in the way it existed at first; I mean to say in such a way that sacrifices could be offered in every place and at every time. Nor could a temple be set up in any fortuitous place, nor could any fortuitous man offer the sacrifice: *Whosoever would, he consecrated him.*[29] On the contrary, He forbade all this and established one single house [as the temple], *Unto the place which the Lord shall chose,*[30] so that sacrifices should not be offered elsewhere: *That thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest.*[31] Also only the offspring of one particular family can be *Priest*[*s*]. All this was intended to restrict this kind of worship, so that only the portion of it should subsist | whose abolition is not required by His wisdom. On the other hand, invocation and prayers are made in every place and by anyone

26. Deut. 5:26. 27. I.e., the capacity of God.
28. Or: He has made a great difference. 29. I Kings 13:33. 30. Deut. 12:26.
31. Deut. 12:13.

whoever he may be. This also applies to the *fringes*,[32] the *doorposts*,[33] and the *phylacteries*[34] and other similar modes of worship. Because of the notion I have revealed to you, people are frequently blamed in the books of the prophets because of their zeal for sacrifices, and it is explained to them that they are not the object of a purpose sought for its own sake and that God can dispense with them. Thus *Samuel* says: *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in hearkening to the voice of the Lord? and so on.*[35] And *Isaiah* says: *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord, and so on.*[36] And *Jeremiah* says: *For I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying: Hearken unto My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people.*[37] This dictum has been regarded as difficult by everyone whose words I have seen or heard. They say: How can *Jeremiah* say of God that He has given us no injunctions *concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, seeing that the greater part of the *commandments* are concerned with these things? However, the purpose of the dictum is as I have explained to you. For he says that the first intention consists only in your apprehending Me and not worshipping someone other than Me: *And I will be your God, and ye shall be My people.* Those laws concerning sacrifices and repairing to the temple were given only for the sake of the realization of this fundamental principle. It is for the sake of that principle that I transferred these modes of worship to My name, so that the trace of *idolatry* be effaced and the fundamental principle of My unity be established. You, however, came and abolished this end, while holding fast to what has been done for its sake. For you have doubted of My existence: *They have belied the Lord, and said: It is not He.*[38] And you have committed *idolatry: And burn incense unto Baal,* | *and walk after other gods . . . and come . . . unto the house, and so on.*[39] And still you continue to repair to *the temple of the Lord*, offering sacrifices, which are things that have not been intended in the first intention.

I have another way of interpreting this *verse*; it too leads to the very same purpose that we have mentioned. It has been made clear both in the [scriptural] text and in the tradition that in the first legislation given to us there was nothing at all *concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices.* You ought

32. Cf. Num. 15:38. 33. Cf. Deut. 6:9; 11:20.
34. Cf. Exod. 13:9 and 16; Deut. 6:8; 11:18. 35. I Sam. 15:22. 36. Isa. 1:11.
37. Jer. 7:22–23. 38. Jer. 5:12.
39. Jer. 7:9–10. The quotation is not quite exact.

not to occupy your mind with *the passover of Egypt*[40] for the reason for this is clear and evident, as we shall set forth.[41] Moreover this happened in *the land of Egypt*, whereas the laws referred to in the *verse* in question are those that have been given to us after *the exodus from Egypt*. For this reason he[42] makes the following restriction in that *verse: In the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt*. For the first *command* given after *the exodus from Egypt* was the one given to us in *Marah*, namely, His saying to us there: *If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and so on.*[43] *There He made for them a statute and a judgment, and so on.*[44] And the correct tradition says: *The Sabbath and the civil laws were prescribed at Marah.*[45] Accordingly the *statute* referred to is the *Sabbath*, and the *judgment* consists in the *civil laws*, that is, in the abolition of mutual wrongdoing. And this is, as we have explained, the first intention: I mean the belief in correct opinions, namely, in the creation of the world in time. For you already know that the foundation of the law addressed to us concerning the Sabbath is its contribution in fortifying this principle, as we have explained in this Treatise.[46] Besides the correctness of the beliefs, the intention[47] also included the abolition of mutual wrongdoing among men. Accordingly it is already clear to you that in the first legislation there was nothing at all *concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, for, as we have mentioned, these belong to the second intention. The very notion | expressed by *Jeremiah* is also set forth in *Psalms* by way of blame to the whole religious community[48] because of its being at that time ignorant of the first intention and not distinguishing between it and the second intention. [The Psalmist] says: *Hear, O My people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: God, thy God, am I. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices and thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before Me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy fold.*[49] Whenever this notion is repeated, this is what is aimed at thereby. Understand this thoroughly and reflect upon it.

40. Cf. Exod. 12:21 and 26–27, according to which the killing of a lamb in sacrifice was already prescribed in Egypt.
41. Cf. III 46. 42. I.e., Jeremiah. 43. Exod. 15:26. 44. Exod. 15:25.
45. B.T., Shabbath, 87b; B.T., Sanhedrin, 56b. 46. Cf. II 31.
47. The first intention is meant. 48. Or: nation. 49. Ps. 50:7–9.

CHAPTER 33

To the totality of purposes of the perfect Law there belong the abandonment, depreciation, and restraint of desires in so far as possible, so that these should be satisfied only in so far as this is necessary. You know already that most of the lusts and licentiousness of the multitude consist in an appetite for eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. This is what destroys man's last perfection, what harms him also in his first perfection,[1] and what corrupts most of the circumstances of the citizens and of the people engaged in domestic governance. For when only the desires are followed, as is done by the ignorant,[2] the longing for speculation is abolished, the body is corrupted, and the man to whom this happens perishes before this is required by his natural term of life; thus cares and sorrows multiply, mutual envy, hatred, and strife aiming at taking away what the other has, multiply. All this is brought about by the fact that the ignoramus regards pleasure alone as the end to be sought for its own sake. Therefore God, may His name be held sublime, employed a gracious ruse through giving us certain laws | that destroy this end and turn thought away from it in every way. He forbids everything that leads to lusts and to mere pleasure. This is an important purpose of this Law. Do you not see how the texts of the *Torah* command to kill him who manifestly has an excessive longing for the pleasure of eating and drinking? For he is *the stubborn and rebellious son*,[3] to whom its following dictum applies: *He is a glutton and a drunkard.*[4] He commands stoning and cutting him off speedily before the matter becomes serious and before he brings about the destruction of many and ruins by the violence of his lust the circumstances of righteous men.

Similarly to the totality of intentions of the Law there belong gentleness and docility; man should not be hard and rough, but responsive, obedient, acquiescent, and docile. You know already His commandment, may He be exalted: *Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.*[5] *Be silent, and hearken, O Israel.*[6] *If ye be willing and obedient.*[7] With regard to docility in accepting what ought to be accepted, it is said: *And we will hear it, and do it.*[8] By way of a parable, it is said about this: *Draw me, we will run after thee.*[9]

1. As to these two perfections, cf. III 27. 2. *jāhiliyya*. Cf. III 8, n. 8.
3. Deut. 21:18. 4. Deut. 21:20. 5. Deut. 10:16. 6. Deut. 27:9.
7. Isa. 1:19. 8. Deut. 5:24.
9. Song of Songs 1:4. In the Midrash to this verse, it is interpreted as referring to the obedience promised by Israel to God at the time of the revelation at Mount Sinai.

Similarly one of the intentions of the Law is purity and sanctification; I mean by this renouncing and avoiding sexual intercourse and causing it to be as infrequent as possible, as I shall make clear.[10] Thus when He, may He be exalted, commanded the religious community[11] to be sanctified with a view to receiving the *Torah*, and He said: *And sanctify them today and tomorrow*[12] – He said: *Come not near a woman.*[13] Consequently He states clearly that *sanctity* consists in renouncing sexual intercourse, just as He also states explicitly that the giving-up of the drinking of wine constitutes *sanctity*, in what He says about the *Nazarite: He shall be saintly.*[14] A text of *Siphra* reads: *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy*[15] – *This concerns santification by the commandments.* And just as the Law designates obedience to these commandments as *sanctity* and *purity*, it also designates transgression of these commandments and the perpetration of evil actions as *impurity*, | as I shall make clear.

Cleaning garments, washing the body, and removal of dirt also constitute one of the purposes of this Law. But this comes after the purification of the actions and the purification of the heart from polluting opinions and polluting moral qualities. For to confine oneself to cleaning the outward appearance through washing and cleaning the garment, while having at the same time a lust for various pleasures and unbridled license in eating and sexual intercourse, merits the utmost blame. *Isaiah* says about this: *They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves to go unto the gardens behind one in the midst, eating the flesh of swine, and so on.*[16] He says: They purify themselves and sanctify themselves in the open and public places; and afterwards, when they are alone in their rooms and in the interior of their houses, they are engaged in acts of disobedience – that is, in their unbridled license in eating forbidden food: *the swine and the detestable thing and the mouse.*[17] Perhaps he refers by means of the words, *behind one in the midst*, to engaging in solitude in forbidden sexual intercourse. To sum up the dictum: Their outward appearances are clean and universally known as unsullied and pure, whereas innerly they are engaged in the pursuit of their desires and the pleasures of their bodies. But this is not the purpose of the Law, for the first purpose is to restrain desire – the purification of the outer coming after the purification of the inner. *Solomon* has drawn attention to those who rely upon washing the body and cleaning the garments, whereas their actions are

10. Cf. III 49. 11. Or: nation. 12. Exod. 19:10. 13. Exod. 19:15.
14. Num. 6:5.
15. Lev. 11:44. The following words are from the Siphra to this verse.
16. Isa. 66:17. 17. Isa. 66:17.

impure and their moral qualities evil. For he says: *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.*[18]

If then you consider likewise these intentions we have mentioned in this chapter, the reasons for many laws will become clear to you; those reasons were unknown before these intentions were known, as I shall explain when recommencing. |

CHAPTER 34

Among the things that you likewise ought to know is the fact that the Law does not pay attention to the isolated. The Law was not given with a view to things that are rare. For in everything that it wishes to bring about, be it an opinion or a moral habit or a useful work, it is directed only toward the things that occur in the majority of cases and pays no attention to what happens rarely or to the damage occurring to the unique human being because of this way of determination and because of the legal character of the governance. For the Law is a divine thing; and it is your business to reflect on the natural things in which the general utility, which is included in them, nonetheless necessarily produces damages to individuals, as is clear from our discourse and the discourse of others. In view of this consideration also, you will not wonder at the fact that the purpose of the Law is not perfectly achieved in every individual and that, on the contrary, it necessarily follows that there should exist individuals whom this governance of the Law does not make perfect. For not everything that derives necessarily from the natural specific forms is actualized in every individual. Indeed, all things proceed from one deity and one agent and *have been given from one shepherd.*[1] The contrary of this is impossible, and we have already explained[2] that the impossible has a stable nature that never changes. In view of this consideration, it also will not be possible that the laws be dependent on changes in the circumstances of the individuals and of the times, as is the case with regard to medical treatment, which is particularized for every individual in conformity with his present temperament. On the contrary,

18. Prov. 30:12–13.
1. Eccles. 12:11. 2. Cf. III 15.

governance of the Law ought to be absolute and universal, including everyone, | even if it is suitable only for certain individuals and not suitable for others; for if it were made to fit individuals, the whole would be corrupted and *you would make out of it something that varies.*[3] For this reason, matters that are primarily intended in the Law ought not to be dependent on time or place; but the decrees ought to be absolute and universal, according to what He, may He be exalted, says: *As for the congregation, there shall be one statute* [*ḥuqqah*] *for you.*[4] However, only the universal interests, those of the majority, are considered in them, as we have explained.

After I have set forth these premises, I shall begin to explain what I have intended to explain.

CHAPTER 35

With a view to this purpose, I have divided all the *commandments* into fourteen classes.

The first class comprises the *commandments* that are fundamental opinions. They are those that we have enumerated in *Laws of the Foundations of the Torah* [*Hilkhoth Yesodei ha-Torah*].[1] *Repentance* and *fasts* also belong, as I shall explain, to this class. With respect to inculcating opinions that are correct and that are useful for belief in the Law, one should not say, what is their utility? as we have explained.

The second class comprises the *commandments* concerned with the prohibition of *idolatry*. They are those that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning Idolatry* [*Hilkhoth ᶜAbodah Zarah*]. Know that the prohibitions regarding *garments of diverse sorts, first products*[2] [of trees], and [sowing] *the vineyard with diverse seeds,*[3] also belong to this class, as shall be explained. The reason for this class is also well known. For all of them are meant to validate the true opinions and to make the multitude cling to them throughout | the ages.

The third class comprises the *commandments* concerned with improvement of the moral qualities. They are those that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning Opinions* [*Hilkhoth Deᶜoth*]. It is well known that through

3. Cf. e.g., B.T., Shabbath, 35b; B.T., Ḥullin, 9a. 4. Num. 15:15.

1. This and the other titles referred to in this chapter are parts of Maimonides' legal compilation, *Mishneh Torah.*

2. Literally: *foreskin.* 3. Cf. III 26.

fine moral qualities human association and society are perfected, which is necessary for the good order of human circumstances.

The fourth class comprises the *commandments* concerned with giving alms, lending, bestowal of gifts, and matters that are connected with this—as for instance *estimations* and *anathemas*,[4] the ordinances concerning *loans* and *slaves*, and all the *commandments* that we have enumerated in the *Book of Seeds* [*Sepher Zeraʿim*] with the exception of those treating of the *mingling* [of diverse species] and the *first products* [of trees]. The reason for all these is manifest, for they are equally useful in turn to all men. For one who is rich today will be poor tomorrow, or his descendants will be poor; whereas one who is poor today will be rich tomorrow, or his son will be rich.

The fifth class comprises the *commandments* concerned with prohibiting wrongdoing and aggression. They are those included in our compilation in the *Book of Torts* [*Sepher Neziqin*]. The utility of this class is manifest.

The sixth class comprises the *commandments* concerned with punishments, as for instance *laws concerning thieves and robbers and laws concerning false witnesses*—in fact most of the matters we have enumerated in the *Book of Judges* [*Sepher Shophetim*]. The utility of this is clear and manifest, for if a criminal is not punished, injurious acts will not be abolished in any way and none of those who design aggression will be deterred. No one is as weak-minded as those who deem that the abolition of punishments would be merciful on men. On the contrary, this would be cruelty itself on them as well as the ruin of the order of the city. On the contrary, mercy is to be found in His command, may He be exalted: *Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates.*[5]

The seventh class comprises the laws of property concerned with the mutual transactions | of people, such as loans, hire for wages, deposits, buying, selling, and other things of this kind. Inheritance also belongs to this group. These are the *commandments* that we have enumerated in the *Book of Acquisition and Judgments* [*Sepher Qinyan ve-Mishpatim*]. The utility of this class is clear and manifest. For these property associations are necessary for people in every city, and it is indispensable that rules of justice should be given with a view to these transactions and that these transactions be regulated in a useful manner.

The eighth class comprises the *commandments* concerning the days in which work is forbidden,[6] I mean *Sabbaths and festivals*. Scripture has

4. I.e., vows that can be redeemed and those that cannot.
5. Deut. 16:18. 6. Literally: the forbidden days.

explained the reason of each of these days and has mentioned the cause for each of them, which may consist either in the intention to inculcate a certain opinion or to procure a rest for the body or in both these things, as we shall explain later on.

The ninth class comprises all the other practices of worship prescribed to everybody,[7] such as prayer and *recitation of Shema*[c] and the other things we have enumerated in the *Book of Love* [*Sepher Ahabah*] with the exception of *circumcision*. The utility of this class is manifest, for it is wholly composed of works that fortify opinions concerning the love of the deity and what ought to be believed about Him and ascribed to Him.

The tenth class comprises the *commandments* concerned with the *Sanctuary* and its utensils and servants. These are the *commandments* that we have enumerated in a portion of the *Book of Divine Worship* [*Sepher Abodah*]. We have already set forth in the foregoing[8] the utility of this class of commandments.

The eleventh class comprises the *commandments* concerned with the *sacrifices*. These are the majority of the *commandments* that we have enumerated in the *Book of Divine Worship* and the *Book of Sacrifices* [*Sepher Qorbanoth*]. We have already set forth in the foregoing[9] the utility of the legislation with regard to the sacrifices in general and the necessity for it in those | times.

The twelfth class comprises the *commandments* concerned with things *unclean and clean*. The purpose of all of them is in general to make people avoid entering the *Sanctuary*, so that it should be considered as great by the soul and feared and venerated, as I shall explain.

The thirteenth class comprises the *commandments* concerned with the prohibition of certain foods and what is connected therewith. These are the *commandments* that we have enumerated in the *Laws concerning Forbidden Foods* [*Hilkhoth Ma'akholoth Asuroth*]. The [commandments concerning] *vows* and the state of the *Nazarites* belong to this class. The purpose of all this is, as we have explained in the Commentary on the *Mishnah* in the introduction to *Aboth*,[10] to put an end to the lusts and licentiousness manifested in seeking what is most pleasurable and to taking the desire for food and drink as an end.

The fourteenth class comprises the *commandments* concerned with the prohibition of certain sexual unions. They are those that we have enumerated in the *Book of Women* [*Sepher Nashim*] and in *Laws concerning*

7. I.e., not only to the Priests and the Levites. 8. Cf. III 32.
9. Cf. III 32. 10. Cf. Maimonides' *Eight Chapters*, IV *in fine*.

Prohibited Sexual Relations [*Hilkhoth Issurei Bi'ah*]. *The interbreeding of beasts* belongs to this class. The purpose of this too is to bring about a decrease of sexual intercourse and to diminish the desire for mating as far as possible, so that it should not be taken as an end, as is done by the ignorant,[11] according to what we have explained in the Commentary on the *Tractate Aboth*.[12] *Circumcision* also belongs to this class.

It is known that all the *commandments* are divided into two groups: *transgressions between man and his fellow man and transgressions between man and God*.[13] Among the classes we have differentiated and enumerated, the fifth, sixth, seventh, and a portion of the third, belong to the group devoted to the relation *between man and his fellow man*, while all the other classes deal with the relation *between man and God*. For every *commandment*, whether it be a prescription or a prohibition, whose purpose it is to bring about the achievement | of a certain moral quality or of an opinion or the rightness of actions, which only concerns the individual himself and his becoming more perfect, is called by them[14] [a commandment dealing with the relation] *between man and God*, even though in reality it sometimes may affect relations *between man and his fellow man*. But this happens only after many intermediate steps and through comprehensive considerations, and it does not lead from the beginning to harming a fellow man. Understand this.

After I have made known the reasons for these classes of commandments, I shall return to examining the *commandments* belonging to each class, namely, those of which it may be fancied that they have no utility or that they constitute a decree that cannot be comprehended by the intellect in any way. And I shall explain the reasons for them and in what respect they are useful, making an exception only for those few whose purpose I have not grasped up to this time.

11. Or: the pagan. 12. Cf. *Eight Chapters*, IV *in fine*.
13. Cf. B.T., Yoma, 85b. The Hebrew word signifying "God" in this context is *maqom*. Hitherto it has been translated literally as "place."
14. I.e., by the talmudic Sages.

CHAPTER 36

The *commandments* comprised in the first class, which are the opinions that we have enumerated in *Laws of the Foundations of the Torah*, have all of them a manifest cause. If you consider them one by one, you discover the correctness of this opinion and its being a demonstrable matter. Similarly all the encouragement to learning and teaching and the fortifying assurances with regard to them figuring therein, are of manifest utility; for if knowledge is not achieved, no right action and no correct opinion can be achieved. There is also a manifest utility in honoring the bearers of the Law; for if a great veneration is not accorded to them in the souls, their voice will not be listened to when they give guidance regarding opinions and actions. Within this *commandment*—I mean its dictum, *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head*[1]—is also included the injunction to be invested with the moral quality of modesty.[2]

To this class also belongs the commandment addressed to us | to swear in His name and the prohibition addressed to us against breaking one's oath and swearing in vain.[3] All this has a manifest reason; for it is intended to glorify Him, may He be exalted. Accordingly these are actions necessitating a belief in His greatness.

In the same way the commandment given to us to call upon Him, may He be exalted, in every calamity—I mean its dictum, *Then ye shall sound an alarm with the trumpets*[4]—likewise belongs to this class. For it is an action through which the correct opinion is firmly established that He, may He be exalted, apprehends our situations and that it depends upon Him to improve them, if we obey, and to make them ruinous, if we disobey; we should not believe that such things are fortuitous and happen by chance. This is the meaning of its dictum,[5] *And if ye walk with Me in the way of chance*,[6] by which it means: If you consider that the calamities with which I cause you to be stricken are to be borne as a mere chance, I shall add for you unto this supposed chance its most grievous and cruel portion. This is the

1. Lev. 19:32.
2. Cf. B.T., Qiddushin, 32b (and Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Talmud Torah, VI 9), where this verse is interpreted as enjoining a modest and humble attitude toward the aged, even if they are pagans.
3. Cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Lev. 19:12; Exod. 20:7.
4. Num. 10:9. 5. Lev. 26:21.
6. Maimonides evidently considers, as do the commentators Ibn Ezra and David Qimḥi, that the word *qeri* (translated here: *in the way of chance*) derives from the same root as the word *miqreh* (chance).

meaning of its dictum:[7] [*And if ye*] *walk with Me in the way of chance,*[8] *then I will walk with you in the way of a furious chance.*[8] For their belief that this is chance contributes to necessitating their persistence in their corrupt opinions and unrighteous actions, so that they do not turn away from them; thus it says: *Thou hast stricken them, but they were not affected.*[9] For this reason we have been commanded to invoke Him, may He be exalted, and to turn rapidly toward Him and call out to Him in every misfortune.

It is manifest that *repentance* also belongs to this class, I mean to the opinions without the belief in which the existence of individuals professing a Law cannot be well ordered. For an individual cannot but sin and err, either through ignorance — by professing an opinion or a moral quality that is not preferable in truth — or else because he is overcome by desire or anger. If then the individual believed that this fracture can never be remedied, he would persist in his error and sometimes perhaps disobey even more because of the fact that no stratagem remains at his disposal. | If, however, he believes in repentance, he can correct himself and return to a better and more perfect state than the one he was in before he sinned. For this reason there are many actions that are meant to establish this correct and very useful opinion, I mean the *confessions,*[10] the *sacrifices* in expiation of negligence and also of certain sins committed intentionally, and the *fasts.* The general characteristic of repentance from any sin consists in one's being divested of it. And this is the purpose of this opinion. Thus the utility of all these things is become manifest.

CHAPTER 37

The *commandments* comprised in the second class are all those *commandments* that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning Idolatry.* It is manifest that all of them have in view deliverance from the errors of *idolatry* and from other incorrect opinions that may accompany *idolatry,* such as belief in *soothsayers, enchanters, sorcerers, charmers,*[1] and others belonging to the same group. When you will have read all the books I have mentioned to you, it will become clear to you that the magic of which you hear consists in actions that used to be performed by the Sabians, the

7. Lev. 26:27–28. 8. *qeri.* Cf. n. 6, this chap. 9. Jer. 5:3
10. Cf. Lev. 5:5; 16:21.
1. Cf. Deut. 37:10–11.

Chasdeans, and the Chaldeans; most of them were also found among the Egyptians and the Canaanites. They caused others to fancy or fancied themselves that these actions had marvellous and extraordinary effects on beings, whether these be a single individual or the population of a city. However, reasoning cannot judge nor can the intellect cognize as true that these actions performed by magicians can necessitate anything whatever – as, for instance, when they seek to gather definite plants at a definite time or | when a certain quantity of one thing and a certain quantity of another is taken. This is a very vast field; I, however, shall reduce – for your benefit – the practices involved to three kinds. The first one consists of those concerning one of the beings, which may be either a plant or an animal or a mineral; the second consists of those concerning the determination of the time at which these practices are performed; the third consists of human actions such as dancing, clapping hands, shouting, laughing, jumping with one leg, lying down upon the earth, burning something, fumigating with a definite fume, or uttering a speech understandable or not. These are the various species of the practices of the magicians.

Furthermore there are magical operations that can be accomplished only with the help of all these practices. For instance they say: This or that quantity of the leaves of a certain plant shall be taken while the moon is under a certain sign of the Zodiac in the East or in one of the other cardinal points; also a definite quantity shall be taken from the horns or the excrements or the hair or the blood of a certain animal while the sun is, for example, in the middle of the sky or at some other determined place; furthermore, a certain mineral or several minerals shall be taken and cast while a certain sign is in the ascendant and the stars in a certain position; then you shall speak and say these and these things and shall fumigate the cast-metal form with these leaves and similar things – whereupon a certain thing will come about. Furthermore, there are magical operations that, as they deem, may be accomplished with the help of only one of these kinds of practices. With regard to most of these magical practices, they pose the condition that those who perform them should necessarily be women. Thus you will find that they set forth with regard to the discovery of water that ten virgins must put on ornaments and red clothes and dance and crawl, | going in turn forward and backward, and point to the sun, and perform the rest of this long operation until, as they think the water goes forth. In the same way they mention that if four women lie down upon their backs, raise their legs, holding them apart, and say and do certain things while in this disgraceful posture, hail will cease falling down upon that place. And they

recount many such fables and ravings. And you will never find them posing some condition other than that they should be performed by women. In all magical operations it is indispensable that the stars should be observed. I mean, they deem that a certain plant should be assigned to the portion of a certain star; similarly they assign every animal and every mineral to a star. They likewise deem that the operations performed by the magicians are various species of worship offered to a certain star, which, being pleased with that operation or speech or fumigation, does for us what we wish.

After these premises, which you will find valid upon reading such books of theirs as are at present in our hands and as I have let you know, hear my discourse: Inasmuch as the intent of the whole Law and the pole around which it revolves is to put an end to *idolatry*, to efface its traces, and to bring about a state of affairs in which it would not be imagined that any star harms or helps in anything pertaining to the circumstances of human individuals—this in view of the fact that such an opinion leads to star worship—it follows necessarily that all magicians must be killed. For a magician is indubitably an *idolater*, even though he goes in special and strange ways that are different from the ways in which the vulgar worship these divinities. And inasmuch as in all these practices the condition is posed that for the greater part they should be performed by women, it says: | *Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live.*[2] And as people naturally feel pity when women are to be killed, it also states specifically with regard to *idolatry*: *Man or woman,*[3] and again reiterates: *Even the man or the woman*[4]—an expression that is not used with regard to *profanation of the Sabbath* and other things. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that naturally women often inspire pity. Inasmuch as the magicians deemed that their magic was effective, that by means of these practices they drove away harmful animals like lions, serpents, and so forth, from the villages; and they also deemed that by means of their magic they warded off various sorts of damage from plants—thus you will find that they had practices that, as they deemed, could prevent hail from falling, and that they deemed that certain practices of theirs killed the worms in the vineyards so that the latter were not destroyed (the destruction of the worms in the vineyards by means of these *Amorite usages,*[5] mentioned in "The Nabatean Agriculture," being expounded at length by them, I mean by the Sabians); that furthermore they deemed that they knew practices that could prevent the leaves and fruits of plants from falling—because of these things that at that time were

2. Exod. 22:17. 3. Deut. 17:2. 4. Deut. 17:5.
5. Literally: *Amorite ways*, an expression designating pagan usages.

generally known, it is stated among other things in *the words of the covenant*[6] that it is because of *idolatry* and of the magical practices by means of which you think that these kinds of harm can be kept away from you that these calamities will befall you. It says: *And I will send the beasts of the field among you, which shall rob you of your children.*[7] And: *And the teeth of beasts will I send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust.*[8] And: *The fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.*[9] And: *Thou shalt plant vineyards and dress them, but thou shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worm shall eat them.*[10] And: *Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy borders, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil, for thine olives shall drop off.*[11] To sum up the matter: Having in view all the devices used by the *idolaters* to perpetuate | their cult through suggesting to people that thereby certain kinds of harm may be warded off and certain kinds of benefits obtained, it is included in *the words of the covenant* that through their cult these kinds of benefits are lost and these kinds of damage come about. Thus it has already become clear to you, you who engage in speculation, what Scripture intended in these particulars of the *curses* and the *blessings* contained in *the words of the convenant*, singling out them rather than the others for statement. Know likewise the extent of the great utility of this.

In order to keep people away from all magical practices, it has been prohibited to observe any of their usages,[12] even those attaching to agricultural and pastoral activities and other activities of this kind. I mean all that is said to be useful, but is not required by speculation concerning nature, and takes its course, in their opinion, in accordance with occult properties. This is the meaning of its dictum: *And ye shall not walk in the customs* [*ḥuqqoth*] *of the nation,*[13] these being those that are called by [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed, Amorite usages.* For they are branches of magical practices, inasmuch as they are things not required by reasoning concerning nature and lead to magical practices that of necessity seek support in astrological notions. Accordingly the matter is turned into a glorification and a worship of the stars. They say explicitly: *All that pertains to medicine does not pertain to the Amorite usages.*[14] They mean by this that all that is required by speculation concerning nature is permitted, whereas other practices are forbidden. It is for this reason that, after it has been said, *A tree which lets its fruits drop is loaded with stones and marked with red chalk,*

6. Cf. Deut. 28:69. 7. Lev. 26:22. 8. Deut. 32:24. 9. Deut. 28:42.
10. Deut. 28:39. 11. Deut. 28:40. 12. I.e., of the usages of the idolaters.
13. Lev. 20:23. 14. B.T., Shabbath, 67a.

this practice is criticized, and it is said: *Why is it loaded with stones? It is with a view to diminishing its sap. But* [*why*] *should it be marked with red chalk? and so on.* It is thus made clear that it could be forbidden, *as pertaining to Amorite usages*, to mark it with red chalk or to do similar things that are not required by reasoning. They similarly say with reference to *a fetus of consecrated animals, which should be buried:* | *It is not* [*allowed*] *to hang it upon a tree or to bury it at a crossroad with reference to Amorite usages.*[15] From this conclude by analogy. You must not consider as a difficulty certain things that they have permitted, as for instance *the nail of one who is crucified and a fox's tooth.*[16] For in those times these things were considered to derive from experience and accordingly *pertained to medicine* and entered into the same class as the hanging of a peony upon an epileptic and the giving of a dog's excrements in cases of the swelling of the throat and fumigation with vinegar and marcasite in cases of hard swellings of the tendons. For it is allowed to use all remedies similar to these that experience has shown to be valid even if reasoning does not require them. For they *pertain to medicine* and their efficacy may be ranged together with the purgative action of aperient medicines. O you who are engaged in speculation, grasp fully and remember the marvellous observations contained in my speech! *For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.*[17]

We have already explained in our great compilation[18] that the shaving of *the corner of the head and of the corner of the beard* has been forbidden[19] because it was a usage of *idolatrous priests.* This is also the reason for the prohibition of *mingled stuff*,[20] for this too was a usage of these *priests*, as they put together in their garments vegetal and animal substances bearing at the same time a seal made out of some mineral; you will find this set forth literally in their books.

This is also the reason for its dictum: *A woman shall not wear man's armor*,[21] *neither shall a man put on a woman's garment.*[22] You will find in the book of Tumtum[23] the commandment that a man should put on a woman's dyed garment when standing before [the planet] Venus and that a woman should put on a cuirass and arms when standing before Mars. In my opinion there is also another reason for this, namely, that

15. B.T., Ḥullin, 77a. 16. B.T., Shabbath, 67a. 17. Prov. 1:9.
18. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, ʿAbodah Zarah, XII 7. 19. Cf. Lev. 19:27.
20. Cf. Deut. 22:11.
21. Maimonides, in accordance with various Jewish sources, considers that the word *keli* (vessel) signifies "armor" in this verse.
22. Deut. 22:5. 23. Cf. III 29.

such a practice arouses desires and necessarily brings about various kinds of debauchery.

As for the prohibition to profit from *idolatry*, the reason for it is most manifest. For | sometimes idols are taken in order to be broken, but are preserved and become a *snare* for him who has taken them. Even if they have been broken and melted down or sold to a *Gentile*, it is forbidden to draw profit from the price obtained for them. The reason for this is that the multitude often believe that accidental matters are essential causes. Thus, for instance, you will find that most people say that since they dwell in one particular house or since they have bought one particular beast of burden or tool, they have become rich and their fortune has increased, these things having been a blessing for them. Accordingly it might happen that a certain individual would have success in his commerce or increase his fortune because of the price obtained for the idols. He would then think that this price was the reason for this and that the blessing deriving from the image he had sold necessitated this result. He accordingly would believe things concerning this image to which the whole wish of the Law runs counter, as becomes clear from all the texts of the *Torah*. This is also the selfsame reason why it is forbidden[24] to draw profit from *ornaments covering an object of worship* and from *offerings to the idols*[25] and from the instruments of [idolatry] so that we should be preserved from this thought. For at that time their belief in such things was strong; it was believed that they caused to live or to die, that all good and evil came from them — I mean, from the stars. Therefore the Law made sure of putting an end to this opinion by means of covenants, attestation, strong oaths, and the *curses* quoted above, and it warned against taking anything and profiting by anything belonging to the idols. And He, may He be exalted, informed us that if anything that was a portion of the price obtained for them was mingled with the fortune of a certain man, it would bring about the loss and the ruin of that fortune. This is the meaning of its dictum: *And thou shalt not bring an abomination into thine house, and be accursed like unto it, and so on.*[26] All the more should it not be believed that there is a blessing in these things. If then you study carefully one by one all the *commandments* dealing with *idolatry*, you will find that the reason for them is manifest and consists in putting an end to these | corrupt opinions and turning people to another direction far away from them.

Among the things to which we shall draw attention belongs the following point: Those that set up these false opinions, which have no root or any

24. Cf. B.T., ʿAbodah Zarah, 51b. 25. Literally: *idolatry*. 26. Deut. 7:26.

utility, in order to fortify belief in them, use the device of spreading among the people the opinion that a certain calamity will befall those who do not perform an action perpetuating this belief. Now this may happen by accident some day to a certain individual, and consequently he will seek to perform the action in question and to follow that belief. Now it is known that it is the nature of men in general to be most afraid and most wary of losing their property and their children. Therefore the worshippers of fire spread abroad the opinion in those times that the children of everyone who would not *make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire*[27] would die. And there is no doubt that because of this absurd belief everybody hastened to perform this action because of the strong pity and apprehension felt with regard to children and because of the trifling character of the action and its ease, for it simply consisted in making them pass through fire. This was more particularly so because care for little children is generally entrusted to women, and it is well known how quickly they are affected and, speaking generally, how feeble are their intellects. Therefore the Law is strongly opposed to this action, an opposition that is affirmed in such terms as are not used with regard to other kinds of *idolatrous* practices: *To render unclean My Sanctuary, and to profane My holy name.*[28] Thereupon the truthful one[29] makes known in the name of God, may He be exalted, and says: Whereas you perform this action so that the children stay alive because of it, God will cause him who performs it to perish and will exterminate his descendants: he says: *Then I will set My face against that man and against his family, and so on.*[30] Know that traces of this action subsist up to now as a consequence of its having been generally accepted in the world. | You will see that midwives take small children in their swaddling clothes, throw a fumigant having a disagreeable odor upon the fire, and move the children over this fume above the fire. This is indubitably a sort of *passage through the fire*, which it is illicit to perform. Consider how perfidious was he who originated this opinion and how he perpetuated it through this imagining, so that its trace was not effaced though the Law has opposed it for thousands of years.

The *idolaters* have acted in a similar way with regard to property. They have made the ordinance that one tree, namely, the *asherah*,[31] should be consecrated to the object of their worship and that its fruits should be taken, part of them serving as an offering while the rest should be eaten in an *idolatrous temple*, as they have explained in the laws concerning the *asherah*.

27 Cf. Deut. 18:10. 28. Lev. 20:3. 29. I.e., Moses. 30. Lev. 20:5.
31. Cf. III 29, n. 29.

They have also prescribed that the first fruits of every tree whose fruits are edible should be used in the same manner, I mean that a portion of them should serve as an offering while the rest should be eaten in an *idolatrous temple*. They have also spread abroad the opinion that if the first fruits of any tree whatever were not treated in this manner, the tree in question would wither or its fruits would drop or its produce would be small or some calamity would befall it; just as they have spread abroad the opinion that every child that was not passed through fire would die. Inasmuch as men were afraid for their property, they likewise hastened to perform these practices. Accordingly the Law opposed this opinion, and He, may He be exalted, commanded that everything produced in the course of three years[32] by a tree whose fruits are edible should be burnt.[33] For some trees bear fruit after one year, others bear their first fruits after two years, and others again after three. This is what happens in the majority of cases when trees are planted in one of the three generally accepted ways, namely: *planting, layering, and grafting*.[34] No attention is paid to him who sows a kernel or a pip. For the Law ties up the commandments | with the majority of cases only, and the first produce of *planting* appears in the *Land of Israel* after a maximum delay of three years. Accordingly He, may He be exalted, has given us a pledge that because of the destruction and loss of the first fruits, the produce of the tree will increase. He says: *That it may yield unto you the increase thereof*.[35] And He has commanded to eat the *fourth-year fruit of planting before the Lord*[36] as a substitute for eating the *first products*[37] [of trees] in an *idolatrous temple*, as we have explained.

The ancient *idolaters* also mention in "The Nabatean Agriculture" that they let certain things mentioned by them putrefy, looking out in this connection for the sun's entering into a certain sign of the Zodiac, and performing many magical operations. They thought that this thing should be prepared by everybody and that whenever one planted a tree bearing edible fruit, one should scatter around it or at its very place a portion of the thing that has been made to putrefy, in order that the tree should grow more quickly and that it should bear fruit in a way contrary to what is usual, within the shortest possible period. They mentioned that this is a wondrous method that is of the same character as the talismans and that it is the most

32. I.e., of its first three years.
33. The biblical text (Lev. 19:23) does not command that these fruits be burnt. They are commanded to be destroyed in B.T., Pesaḥim, 22b, and B.T., Baba Qamma, 101a. Cf. Mishnah, Temurah, VII 5.
34. Cf. Mishnah, Shebiʿith, II 6. 35. Lev. 19:25.
36. Cf. Lev. 19:24; Mishnah, Maʿaser Sheni, V 4. 37. Literally: *foreskin*. Cf. Lev. 19:23.

wondrous of the methods of magic in regard to increase in rapidity in the production of the fruit of all trees that produce fruit. We have already explained to you and made known to you that the Law eschews all these magical operations. Therefore the Law forbids all that is grown by trees bearing edible fruit within the period of three years from the day they were planted. Accordingly there is no need, contrary to what they thought, to increase their rapidity in producing fruit. After three years, however, the produce of most of the trees in Syria bearing edible fruit attains its perfect state according to the course of nature, and there is no object in resorting to the generally known magical operation that was employed by them. Understand this wondrous thing too.

One of the opinions generally known in those times and perpetuated by the Sabians was expressed by their statement concerning the grafting of a tree of one species onto another tree. They said that if this is done | when a certain star is in the ascendant and if certain fumigations are made and certain invocations pronounced at the time of the grafting, that which is produced by the graft will be a thing that, as they believe, will be very useful. The clearest point concerning these things is the one mentioned in the beginning of the "Agriculture"[38] concerning the grafting of the olive tree onto the citron tree. In my opinion it must indubitably be true that the *book of medicaments* that *was suppressed by Hezekiah*[39] belonged to this group. They also mention that when one species is grafted upon another, the bough that is meant to be grafted ought to be held in the hand of a beautiful girl[40] and of a man who has come into her in a disgraceful manner that they describe and that the woman must graft the bough upon the tree while the two are performing this act. There is no doubt that this was generally adopted and that no one remained that acted otherwise, especially in view of the fact that in this custom pleasure of sexual intercourse is joined to the desire for the benefits in question. Therefore the *mingling* [of diverse species], I mean *the grafting of one tree upon another*, is forbidden, so that we shall keep far away from the causes of *idolatry* and from the *abominations* of their unnatural kinds of sexual intercourse. It is with reference to *the grafting of a tree* that it has been forbidden to join together any two species of *seeds*, even if only putting one near the other. If you examine what is transmitted in the legal science concerning this *commandment*, you will find that *the grafting of a tree should in all places be punished with whipping according to the Torah*,[41] for it is at the origin of the prohibition; whereas

38. I.e., "The Nabatean Agriculture." 39. B.T., Berakhoth, 10b; B.T., Pesaḥim, 56a.
40. Or: slave girl. 41. B.T., Qiddushin, 39a.

the *mingling of diverse seeds*, I mean their being put one near the other, is only forbidden in the *Land of Israel.*

They also state explicitly in the "Agriculture"[42] that it was their custom to sow barley and grapes together, for they thought that a vineyard could only prosper through this practice. Consequently the Law has forbidden the [sowing of] *a vineyard with diverse seeds* and has commanded burning all such things.[43] For all *the customs* [*ḥuqqoth*] *of the nations* that were thought to have occult properties were prohibited, even if | they did not at all smack of *idolatry*; just as we have explained with reference to their dictum: *It is not* [*allowed*] *to hang it upon a tree, and so on.*[44] All these, I mean *their customs* [*ḥuqqotehem*], which are called *Amorite usages*,[45] have been forbidden because of their leading to *idolatry*. If you consider their customs in agriculture, you will find that in certain kinds of agriculture they turn toward the stars, in others toward the two luminaries.[46] Often they fix the time for sowing when certain constellations are in ascendant, making fumigations; and he who plants or sows goes about in a circle. Some of them consider that he should go about in a circle five times with a view to the five planets.[47] Others consider that he should go about in a circle seven times with a view to the five planets and two luminaries. And they deem that in all this there are occult properties that are very useful for agriculture, in order that they might bind people to the worship of the stars. Consequently all these *customs* [*ḥuqqoth*] *of the nations* have been forbidden in a general way, and it says: *And ye shall not walk in the customs* [*ḥuqqoth*] *of the nation, and so on.*[48] That among them which was more generally accepted and widespread or that which contained an explicit reference to some kind of *idolatry* was the object of various particular prohibitions—for instance, those regarding the *first products* [of trees], the *mingling* [of diverse species], the [sowing of] *a vineyard with diverse seeds.* I wonder at the dictum of *Rabbi Josiah*, considered as a *legal decision*, concerning [the sowing of] *a vineyard with diverse seeds*, according to which one has committed no transgression *unless one sows together, in one throw of the hand, wheat, barley, and pips of grapes.*[49] Doubtless he had learned that this custom had its origin in the *Amorite usages.*

42. I.e., "The Nabatean Agriculture."
43. Cf. Deut. 22:9; Mishnah, Kil'aim, VIII 1; B.T., Qiddushin, 39a.
44. Mishnah, Ḥullin, IV 7. Cf. n. 15, this chap. 45. Cf. n. 5, this chap.
46. I.e., the sun and the moon.
47. Literally: scintillating stars. In this passage the sun and the moon are obviously not included among the five planets referred to.
48. Lev. 20:23.
49. B.T., Berakhoth, 22a; B.T., Qiddushin, 39a; B.T., Ḥullin 82b and 136b.

Thus it has been made clear to you, so that there can be no doubt about it, that *mingled stuff*, the *first products* [of trees], and the *mingling* [of diverse species] were forbidden because of *idolatry*, and that *their customs* [*ḥuqqotehem*], which have been referred to, were forbidden because they lead to *idolatry*, as we have explained. |

CHAPTER 38

The *commandments* comprised in the third class are those that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning Opinions*. The utility of all of them is clear and evident, for all concern moral qualities in virtue of which the association among people is in good condition. This is so manifest that I need not expatiate upon it. Know that certain *commandments* also contain prescriptions that are intended to lead to the acquisition of a useful moral quality, even if they prescribe certain actions that are deemed to be merely *decreed by Scripture*[1] and not to have a purpose. We will explain them one by one in their proper places. As for those that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning Opinions*, they are all explicitly stated to have as their purpose the acquisition of the noble moral qualities in question.

CHAPTER 39

The *commandments* comprised in the fourth class are those included in the *Book of Seeds* of our compilation, with the exception of those dealing with the *mingling* [of diverse species]; also the *law* concerning *estimations and anathemas*[1] and also the *commandments* that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning the Lender and the Borrower* and those that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning Slaves*. If you consider all these *commandments* one by one, you will find that they are manifestly useful through instilling pity for the weak and the wretched, giving strength in various

1. According to this view, no reason can be found for these prescriptions. Maimonides opposes this view.

1. Cf. III 35, n. 4.

ways to the poor, | and inciting us not to press hard upon those in straits and not to afflict the hearts of individuals who are in a weak position.

As for *gifts to the poor*, their meaning is manifest. The reason for the *offerings*[2] and the *tithes* is similarly manifest: *Because he hath no portion nor inheritance with thee.*[3] You know the reason for this: so that this *tribe* as a whole should be devoted exclusively to the divine service and to knowing the Law and should not be engaged in tilling and harvesting, but should be concerned exclusively with God; as it says: *They shall teach Jacob Thine judgments, and Israel Thy Torah.*[4] You will find that the text of the *Torah* speaks in several passages of *the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow*; for it always considers [the Levite] as one of the *poor* in view of the fact that he has no property.

As for the *second tithe*, it is commanded that it should be spent exclusively on food in *Jerusalem*.[5] For this leads of necessity to giving some of it in alms; for as it could only be employed on nourishment, it was easy for a man to have others have it little by little. Thus it necessarily brought about a gathering in one place, so that brotherhood and love among the people were greatly strengthened.[6]

As for the *fourth-year fruit of planting*,[7] even though — because of its connection with the prescriptions concerning the *first products*[8] — it smacks, as we have mentioned, of *idolatry*, it falls into the same class as the prescriptions concerning the *offering*,[9] the *cake of dough*,[10] the *first fruits*,[11] *and the first of the fleece*;[12] for all first produces have been assigned to God so that the moral quality of generosity be strengthened and the appetite for eating and for acquisition be weakened. The *Priest's* receiving *the shoulder, the two jaws, and the stomach*[13] has the same meaning; for *jaws* are a primary part of the body of the animal, and *the shoulder* is the right shoulder and is also the first part that has branched off from the body, and the *stomach* is the first of all the intestines.

As for the *reading* on the occasion of the offering of *first fruits*,[14] it also is conducive to the moral quality of humility, for it is carried out by him who carries the basket *on his shoulders*.[15] It contains an acknowledgment

2. Destined for the Priests. 3. Deut. 14:29. The verse refers to the Levites.
4. Deut. 33:10.
5. Cf. Deut. 14:22–29; 26:12–13. Cf. Mishnah, Maʿaser Sheni, I–III.
6. Or: A gathering in one place necessarily leads to love and brotherhood among the people being greatly strengthened.
7. Cf. III 37, n. 33 and 36. 8. Literally: *foreskin*.
9. To the Priests. Cf. Deut. 18:4. 10. Cf. Num. 15:20.
11. Cf. Exod. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 26:2. 12. Cf. Deut. 18:4.
13. Cf. Deut. 18:3. 14. Cf. Deut. 26:3–10. 15. Cf. Mishnah, Bikkurim, III 4.

of | God's beneficence and bountifulness, so that man should know that it is a part of the divine worship that man should remember states of distress at a time when he prospers. This purpose is frequently affirmed in the *Torah: And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant, and so on.*[16] For there was a fear of the moral qualities that are generally acquired by all those who are brought up in prosperity—I mean conceit, vanity, and neglect of the correct opinions: *Lest when thou hast eaten and art satisfied, and houses, and so on.*[17] And it says: *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked, and so on.*[18] It is because of this apprehension that the commandment has been given to carry out a *reading* every year before Him, may He be exalted, and in presence of His Indwelling, on the occasion of the offering of *first fruits.* You also know already that the *Torah* insists upon the *plagues*, which befell the Egyptians, being always remembered: *That thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth, and so on.*[19] And it says: *And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and so on.*[20] And this was fittingly arranged, for these are the stories that show the truth of prophecy and of reward and punishment. Now in the case of every *commandment* leading to a mention of some miracle or to a perpetuation of this belief, the utility of the *commandment* is obvious.

It states explicitly with reference to [the redemption of] *the human firstborn* and [the sacrifice of] *the animal firstborn: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, and so on; therefore I sacrificed to the Lord, and so on.*[21] The reason why this is particularized with regard to *oxen, small cattle, and asses*[22] is most manifest. For these are domestic animals that are raised and are to be found in most places, more particularly in Syria, and even more particularly among [the people of] *Israel*; all of us being shepherds from fathers and grandfathers: *Thy servants were*[23] *shepherds, and so on.*[24] But horses and camels are in most cases not to be found in the possession of shepherds, nor are they found in all places. Consider the raid against *Midian:*[25] you will not find on that occasion any animals other than *oxen, small cattle, and asses.* For the species of asses was necessary to all men and especially | to those engaged in agricultural work: *And I have oxen and asses;*[26] but camels and horses are in most cases found only in the possession of few men and only in some places.

16. Deut. 5:15; 16:12.
17. Deut. 8:12. The sentence is continued in v. 14: *then thy heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord thy God. . . .*
18. Deut. 32:15. 19. Deut. 16:3. 20. Exod. 10:2. 21. Exod. 13:15.
22. Cf. Num. 18:17; Exod. 13:13.
23. The Hebrew word for "were" (*hayu*) has been inserted in the verse by Maimonides; or, at least, it figures in the majority of the manuscripts and in Ibn Tibbon's translation.
24. Gen. 47:3. 25. Cf. Num. 31. 26. Gen. 32:6.

As for the prescription concerning *the breaking of the neck of the firstling of an ass*,[27] this is due to its leading necessarily to the firstling's being redeemed. Therefore it has been said: *The commandment that it be redeemed is prior to the commandment that its neck be broken.*[28]

With regard to all the *commandments* that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee*, some of them are meant to lead to pity and help for all men – as the text has it: *That the poor of thy people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat, and so on*[29] – and are meant to make the earth more fertile and stronger through letting it lie fallow. Others are meant to lead to benevolence toward slaves and poor people; I refer to *remission of debts and freeing of slaves*. Others consider what is useful from a permanent point of view in providing for a living, through turning the whole land into an inalienable possession that cannot be sold in absolute fashion: *And the land shall not be sold in perpetuity;*[30] consequently a man's property remains, as far as the landed property itself is concerned, reserved for him and his children, and he can only exploit its produce. Thus we have given reasons for everything that is included in the *Book of Seeds* figuring in our compilation with the exception of *the interbreeding of beasts*,[31] the reason for which will be explained later on.[32]

All the *commandments* that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning Estimations and Anathemas* likewise deal with charitable donations. Some of these go to the *Priests*, others for *repairing the Temple*. Through all this, likewise, the moral quality of generosity is acquired, and the result achieved that man holds property in slight esteem where God is concerned, and is not miserly. For most of the evils that arise among people in the cities are due only to a furious desire for possessions and for increasing them and to the passion of acquisition.

Similarly if you consider one by one all the *commandments* that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning the Lender and the Borrower*, you will find that all are imbued with benevolence, pity, | and kindness for the weak; they forbid depriving anyone of a utility necessary for his nourishment; I mean: *No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge.*[33]

Similarly all the *commandments* that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning Slaves* are all of them imbued with pity and benevolence for the weak. Thus great pity is manifested in the prescription according to which a *Canaanite slave* is set free if he has been deprived of a limb, so that slavery should not be conjoined in his case with mutilation. This applies even if

27. Cf. Exod. 13:13. 28. Mishnah, Bekhoroth, I 7. 29. Exod. 23:11.
30. Lev. 25:23. 31. Cf. Lev. 19:19. 32. Cf. III 49. 33. Deut. 24:6.

he has only been made to lose a tooth, and all the more in the case of other parts of the body. It is also not permitted, as we have explained in *Mishneh Torah*,[34] to strike him except with a whip or a stick or similar things. And, even so, if the master strikes him so hard that he dies, he is punished with death on his account, as all other men would be.

The *commandment* given in His saying, *Thou shalt not deliver unto his master a slave*,[35] besides manifesting pity, contains a great utility – namely, it makes us acquire this noble moral quality [that is, pity]; namely, it makes us protect and defend those who seek our protection and not deliver them over to those from whom they have fled. It is not even enough to protect those who seek your protection, for you are under another obligation toward him: you must consider his interests, be beneficent toward him, and not pain his heart by speech. This is the meaning of His dictum, may He be exalted: *He shall dwell with thee, in the midst of thee, . . . within one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not wrong him.*[36] If this law is imposed upon us with regard to the least of men and the lowest in degree, namely, the slave, how must you act when a man of great worth seeks your protection! What an obligation must you have with regard to him!

On the contrary, the wrongdoer and the worker of injustice should not be protected when he seeks our protection and should not be pitied, nor should his rightful punishment be abolished in any way, even if he seeks the protection of the greatest individual and the one having the highest rank. This is the meaning of its dictum: *Thou shalt take him from Mine altar, that he may die.*[37] Thus the man referred to seeks the protection of God, may He be exalted, and holds fast to a thing attached to His name; | in spite of that, however, He does not protect him, but orders him to be delivered over to him who has the right to inflict punishment on him and from whom he has fled. All the more if the man in question has sought the protection of a human individual: the latter ought not to protect or to pity him, for pity for wrongdoers and evil men is tantamount to cruelty with regard to all creatures. These are indubitably the moderate moral qualities that form a part of the *righteous statutes* [*ḥuqqim*] *and judgments.*[38] These are not moral qualities pertaining to the Pagans[39] who considered pride and partisanship with regard to any chance individual, irrespective of his being the wrongdoer or the wronged, as praiseworthy virtues, as is generally known from their stories and poems. Accordingly every *commandment* that belongs to this class has a manifest reason and an evident utility.

34. Cf. Roṣeaḥ, XI 14. 35. Deut. 23:16. 36. Deut. 23:17. 37. Exod. 21:14.
38. Deut. 4:8. Cf. III 26. 39. Or: ignorant.

CHAPTER 40

The *commandments* comprised in the fifth class are those that we have enumerated in the *Book of Torts*. All of them are concerned with putting an end to acts of injustice and with the prevention of acts causing damage. In order that great care should be taken to avoid causing damage, man is held responsible for every act causing damage deriving from his possessions or caused by an act of his, if only it was possible for him to be cautious and take care not to cause damage. Therefore we are held responsible for damage deriving from our beasts, so that we should keep watch over them; and also for damage from *fire*[1] and from a *pit*,[2] for these two belong to the works of man, and he can keep watch over them and take precautions with regard to them, so that no harm is occasioned by them. These laws contain considerations of justice to which I will draw attention. Thus one *is free from responsibility* [for the damage caused by] *a tooth or a foot*[3] *in a public place.*[4] For this is a matter with regard to which it is impossible | to take precautions, and also damage is seldom caused in this way. Moreover he who puts a thing *in a public place* is at fault toward himself and exposes his property to destruction. Accordingly one *is only responsible for* [damage caused by] *a tooth or a foot in the field of the injured party.*[5]

On the other hand, damage caused by a *horn* and similar things regarding which precautions can be taken in all places and with respect to which those who walk *in public places* cannot take care, the law applicable to it—I mean the *horn*—is one and the same in all places. There is, however, a distinction that is made between an animal that is *docile* and one about which its owner *has been warned.* If the act is exceptional, the owner is held responsible only for *half the damage;* if, however, the animal that causes the damage continually does similar things and is known for this, the owner is held responsible for *the whole of the damage.*[6]

The price of a slave is generally fixed at half the price at which a free man is generally estimated; for you will find that the *estimations of men* amount at the utmost to *sixty shekels,*[7] whereas *the money paid for a slave* amounts to *thirty shekels of silver.*[8] The fact that the *beast* that kills a man is

1. Cf. Exod. 22:5. 2. Cf. Exod. 21:33. 3. Of an animal.
4. Cf. B.T., Baba Qamma, 14a and 19b. 5. Cf. B.T., Baba Qamma, 14a and 19b.
6. Cf. Exod. 21:35–36; B.T., Baba Qamma, 26a.
7. Cf. Lev. 27:3. But the sum mentioned there is fifty shekels, which is also the sum mentioned by Maimonides himself in *Mishneh Torah,* ʿArakhin, I 3.
8. Exod. 21:32.

killed,[9] is not to be regarded as a punishment for it – an absurd opinion that the heretics[10] impute to us – but is a punishment for its owner. For this reason it is forbidden to use its flesh, so that its owner should take great care in watching over it and should know that if it kills a child or an adult, a free man or a slave, he will obligatorily lose its price; and if he *has been warned* about it, he must pay *compensation* over and above the loss of its price. This is also the reason for killing *a beast with which a human being has lain*,[11] so that its owner should watch over and take care of it, just as he takes care of his own family, in order that he should not lose it. For men are as solicitous for their property as for their own selves; some of them even prefer their property to themselves. However, in most cases they hold both in equal esteem: *And take us for slaves, and take our asses.*[12]

This class also comprises the prescription to kill | the *pursuer*.[13] This law – I mean the prescription to kill him who wishes to accomplish an act of disobedience before he performs it – is only applicable to two kinds of acts: *If one pursues his fellow man in order to kill him, and if one pursues someone in order to expose the latter's nakedness.* For these are acts of wrongdoing that cannot be repaired once they have been accomplished. As for the other *transgressions* that are punished with *death by order of a court of law*, such as *idolatry* and the profanation of the *Sabbath*, they do not constitute an act of wrongdoing with regard to someone else, but concern only thoughts; and therefore the transgressor is not killed because of his wish, but only if he commits the transgression.

It is already known that *coveting* is prohibited because it leads to *desire*, and *desire* is prohibited because it leads to *robbery*; it is thus that [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, have explained it.

The situation with regard to the commandment *to return a lost thing*[14] is clear, for while this is an excellent moral quality from the point of view of good relations, it is also useful because there is reciprocity. For if you do not return a thing lost by somebody else, the thing lost by you will not be returned, just as your son will not honor you if you do not honor your father. There are many other examples of this.

The commandment that *one who kills a man unawares shall go into exile*[15] is imposed with a view to calming the soul of the *revenger of blood*,

9. Cf. Exod. 21:28–29.
10. *al-Khawārij*, the term used by Maimonides, often designates the Qaraites, when used in rabbinical texts.
11. Cf. Lev. 20:15–16. 12. Gen. 43:18. 13. Cf. Mishnah, Sanhedrin, VIII 7.
14. Cf. Deut. 22:1–3.
15. Cf. Exod. 21:13; Num. 35:11–28; Deut. 4:41–43; 19:2–10; Josh. 20.

so that he should not see the man by means of whom the misfortune has happened. And his return[16] is made to depend upon the death of the individual who, for the whole of *Israel*, is the greatest and most beloved of human beings. For thereby the soul of the victim of misfortune whose kinsman has been killed will have been calmed. For it is human nature that one who has been stricken by misfortune finds consolation in the fact that someone else has been stricken by a similar misfortune or by one that is greater. And among the misfortunes constituted by the death of individuals, none to our mind is greater than that constituted by the death of a *High Priest*.

As for the commandment regarding *the breaking of the neck of a heifer*,[17] its utility is manifest. For the responsibility for it is incumbent upon *the city that is nearest unto the slain*, and in most cases the killer is one of its inhabitants. According to what is stated in the interpretation, the elders of that city shall call | upon God to bear witness that they were not remiss in repairing and watching over the roads and protecting all the wayfarers. His having been killed in spite of this is not due to our having neglected the general interests. Furthermore, we do not know who killed him. Then necessarily in most cases there will be many stories and discussions among the people because of the investigation, the going-forth of the elders, the measurements, and the fact that the heifer is brought there. Thus, because of the matter being universally known, the killer could perhaps be recognized. For he who knows the killer, has heard about him, or has been led to him by certain conjunctures, will say: Such and such a one is the killer. Now when some individual, be it only a *woman* or a *female slave*, says: Such and such has killed him, *the neck of the heifer is not broken*.[18] For it is established that if the killer were known[19] and silence were kept about him while they called upon God to bear witness that they do not know the killer, there would be in this great foolhardiness and a great sin. Accordingly even a woman will tell about him if she knows. As soon as he is known, a useful purpose will be achieved. For even if the *court* does not sentence him to death, the ruler will kill him; for he may kill on the grounds of a presumption. And if the ruler does not kill him, the *revenger of blood* will do it; for he will use stratagems in order to take him by surprise and kill him. Accordingly it is clear that the utility of the commandment concerning *the breaking of the neck of a heifer* is to be found in the fact that in this way the killer becomes generally known. This notion is corroborated by the fact that the place in which *the heifer has her neck broken, should not ever be*

16. That of the killer. 17. Cf. Deut. 21:1–8. 18. Cf. Mishnah, Sota, IX 6.
19. Even though it be to only one individual.

tilled or sown.[20] Consequently the owner of that land will use all stratagems and investigate in order that the killer be known and that thus *the heifer will not have her neck broken* and that consequently his land will not be prohibited to him *forever.* |

CHAPTER 41

The *commandments* comprised in the sixth class are concerned with punishments; and their utility, speaking generally, is well known, and we have already mentioned it. Hear then the particulars concerning this and a judgment concerning every strange case figuring in them.

The punishment meted out to anyone who has done wrong to somebody else consists in general in his being given exactly the same treatment that he has given to somebody else. If he has injured the latter's body, he shall be injured in his body, and if he has injured him in his property, he shall be injured in his property. The owner of the property may be indulgent and forgive. To a murderer alone, however, because of the greatness of his wrongdoing, no indulgence shall be shown at all and no blood money shall be accepted from him: *And the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.*[1] Hence even if the victim[2] remains alive for an hour or for several days, speaks, and is in full possession of his mind and says: Let him who murdered me be dismissed; I have forgiven and pardoned him—this cannot be accepted from him. For necessarily there must be a soul for a soul—the young and the old, the slaves and the free, the men of knowledge and the ignorant, being considered as equal. For among the crimes of man there is none greater than this.

And he who has deprived someone of a member, shall be deprived of a similar member: *As he hath maimed a man, so shall it be rendered unto him.*[3] You should not engage in cogitation concerning the fact that in such a case we punish by imposing a fine. For at present my purpose is to give reasons for the [biblical] texts and not for the pronouncements of the legal science.[4] Withal I have an opinion concerning this provision of legal science, which should only be expressed by word of mouth. A fine was imposed in

20. Cf. Deut. 21:4.

1. Num. 35:33. 2. Literally: the slain. 3. Lev. 24:20.

4. This is the usual meaning of *fiqh*, the Arabic word used here. Maimonides applies it in this passage and elsewhere to the talmudic legal code.

the case of wounds in requital of which exactly similar wounds could not be inflicted: *Only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be throughly healed.*[5]

He who has caused damage to property shall have inflicted upon him damage to his property up to exactly the same amount: *Whom | the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbor*[6]—that is, the thing taken by him and an equal amount taken from the property of the thief.

Know that the more frequent the kind of crime is and the easier it is to commit, the greater the penalty for it must be, so that one should refrain from it. On the other hand, the penalty for a thing that happens seldom is lighter. Therefore the fine imposed on him who steals sheep is double the fine imposed for the theft of other *transportable* objects, I refer to *fourfold reparation*,[7] the condition being that he has let them go out of his possession by selling them or has slaughtered them. For they have always been stolen in the majority of cases because they were in the fields where they cannot be watched over the way it is possible to watch over things that are in towns. And therefore those who steal them generally make haste to sell them so that they should not be recognized while being in their possession, or to slaughter them so that they should disappear. Hence the penalty for such cases of theft as are in the majority is greater. The fine imposed for the theft of an ox is even greater by the value of the thing stolen,[8] for it is easier to steal them. For sheep graze together, so that the shepherd can see all of them, and in most cases it is only by night that they can be stolen. Oxen, on the other hand, graze far apart from one another, as is mentioned in the "Agriculture," so that the shepherd cannot watch over them, and accordingly they are more often stolen.

Similarly the *law concerning false witnesses*[9] is that the thing that they wished to be done unto another shall be done unto them: if they wished the one they bore witness against to be killed, they shall be killed; if they wished him to be flogged, they shall be flogged: and if they wished him to be fined, they shall have a similar fine imposed on them. In all this the intention is to make the penalty equal to the crime, and this too is a meaning of the expression: *righteous judgments.*[10]

The fact that a *robber* does not have to pay something additional as a

5. Exod. 21:19. 6. Exod. 22:8. 7. Cf. Exod. 21:37; II Sam. 12:6.
8. More or less literally: by the amount of one. Cf. Exod. 21:37; five oxen must be paid for one that has been stolen.
9. Cf. Deut. 19:19.
10. Cf. Deut. 4:8. Cf. the interpretation of this expression that appears in III 26.

fine – for the *fifth part* is merely paid in *expiation* of a false oath[11] – is due to the rare occurrence | of robbery. For the calamity of stealing is more frequent than robbery; for a theft is possible in all places, whereas robbery in towns can only be carried out with difficulty. Furthermore, both things that are in the open and those that have been hidden away and safeguarded with care can be stolen, whereas only things that are in the open and exposed to being perceived can be robbed; so that a man can safeguard himself and take precautions against a robber, making preparations against him, but cannot do this with regard to a thief. Moreover the robber is known, so that he can be summoned and so that one can try to make him give back that which he has taken, whereas the thief is not known. For all these reasons the *thief*, but not the *robber*, is sentenced to pay a *fine*.

Introduction. Know that whether a penalty is great and most grievous or small and easy to bear depends on four things being taken into consideration. The first is the greatness of the crime: for actions from which great harm results entail a heavy penalty, whereas actions from which only small and slight harm results entail but a light penalty. The second is the frequency of the occurrence of the crime: for a crime that occurs rather often ought to be prevented by means of a heavy penalty, whereas a slight penalty suffices to prevent one that is rare in view of its rarity. The third is the strength of incitement: for a man can be made to give up a thing toward which he is incited – either because desire draws him strongly toward it or because of the strength of habit or because of his feeling great hardship when refraining from it – only by fear of a heavy penalty. The fourth is the ease with which the action can be committed in secret and concealment, so that the others are unaware of it: for the deterrent for this can only be the fear of a great and heavy penalty.

After this | introduction has been made, you should know that classification of punishments, according to the text of the *Torah*, comprises four degrees: [1] that which entails *death by order of a court of law*; [2] that which entails *being cut off* – that is, being whipped, the crime being believed withal to be a great one; [3] that which entails being whipped, but the crime is not believed to be a great one, but a mere *transgression*, or entails *death at the hands of God*;[12] [4] that in which there is only a prohibition the transgression of which does not even entail flogging. To this degree belong all *transgressions in which there is no action*[13] – except vain *oaths*, because of the belief one ought to hold as to glorifying Him, may He be

11. Cf. Lev. 5:24. 12. Literally: *Heaven*.
13. Cf. B.T., Makkoth, 16a; B.T., Shebuʿoth, 21a; B.T., Temurah, 3a.

exalted; the *substitution* of an animal for one previously chosen for sacrifice, in order that this should not result in *sacrifices* consecrated to Him, may He be exalted, being held in light esteem; and *cursing one's fellow man in the name* [of God], for in the opinion of the multitude the injury resulting from curses is greater than that which may befall the body. All *transgressions*[14] other than these *in which there is no action* can only result in little damage, and it is also impossible to take care not to commit them, for they consist in words only. If their perpetrators were punished, people would have their backs flogged all the time. Moreover a *warning* with regard to them cannot be conceived.

There is also wisdom in the number of the strokes, for it is determinate with regard to the maximum and indeterminate with regard to the individuals. For an individual may receive only such flogging as he can bear, but the maximum number of strokes is forty, even if he can bear one hundred.

You will find there is no obligation for a [sentence of] *death* [to be pronounced] *by a court of law* with reference to prohibited foods, for in this there is no great harm, and people are not strongly attracted to them as they are by the pleasure of sexual intercourse. The penalty of *being cut off* is entailed by the eating of certain foods, blood[15] for instance, for they had a great desire at that time to eat of it because of a certain kind of *idolatrous cult*, as is explained in the book of Tumtum. Much stress is therefore laid upon this. | The penalty of *being cut off* is also entailed by the eating of fat[16] because people take pleasure in it; also it is especially used for *sacrifice* in order to glorify it, as shall be explained. Similarly the penalty of *being cut off* is entailed by the partaking of *leavened bread during Passover and of food on the day of fasting*[17] because of the hardship imposed by this kind of abstention and because of the belief to which these actions lead. For these are actions that fortify opinions that are foundations of the Law, I mean *the exodus from Egypt* and its miracles and the belief in *repentance: For on this day shall atonement be made, and so on.*[18] The penalty of *being cut off* is also entailed by the eating of the *remainder* [of a sacrifice] or of a *profaned* [sacrifice] or of something *holy while one was unclean,*[19] just as it is entailed by the eating of fat; the purpose being the glorification of the *sacrifice*, as will be explained later on.

14. Comprised in the class in question. 15. Cf., e.g., Lev. 7:26–27.
16. More precisely, of certain fats. Cf. Lev. 7:23–25.
17. Cf. Exod. 12:15; Lev. 23:29.
18. Lev. 16:30.
19. Cf. Lev. 7:16–21; 19:5–8.

As for *death by order of a court of law*, you will find that this sentence is only brought on in grave cases: that is, either in the case of the corruption of belief or in that of a very great crime. I refer to *idolatry*, *adulterous or incestuous sexual intercourse*, *and the shedding of blood* and all that leads to these crimes as well as in the cases of the profanation of the *Sabbath*,[20] as the latter fortifies the belief in the creation of the world; of a false claim of prophecy; of a *rebellious elder*,[21] because of the great harm that results in these cases; of *him that smiteth his father and his mother and curseth his father and his mother*,[22] because of the great impudence of the thing and its destroying the good order of the household, which is the first part of the city. As for a *stubborn and rebellious son*,[23] he must be put to death because of what he will become, for necessarily he will murder later on. *He that stealeth a man*[24] must likewise be punished in this manner, for he exposes him to death. Also *he that comes breaking in*,[25] for he too is prepared to kill, as [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, have explained.[26] These three, I mean a *stubborn and rebellious son*, *he that stealeth a man and selleth him*, *and he that comes breaking in*, will become shedders of blood. You will not find that *death by order of a court of law* is prescribed except in the case of these great crimes. Not all *incestuous and adulterous sexual intercourse* is punished by *death by order of a court of law;* only such as is easy to engage in or is most shameful or has the strongest attraction. | That which is not of this kind is merely punished by *cutting off*. Nor are all species of *idolatry* punished by *death by order of a court of law*, but only the fundamental ones, such as calling the people to worship idols, *prophesying in their name*, *making* [children] *to pass through fire*, [consulting] *familiar spirits*, and being a *wizard* and a *sorcerer*.

It is clear that as there must be punishments, it is indispensable to have judges distributed in every town. There must be testimony of witnesses, and a ruler who is feared and held in awe and who uses all sorts of deterrents and fortifies the authority of the judges and in his turn draws strength from them. Thus the reasons for all the *commandments* that we have enumerated in the *Book of Judges* have been explained. It behooves us now, in conformity with the purpose of this Treatise, to call attention to some that figure there, among them to those concerning a *rebellious elder*. I shall say: Inasmuch as God, may He be exalted, knew that the commandments of this

20. Cf. Exod. 31:13–15.
21. Cf. Deut. 18:20; 17:12. Cf. Mishnah, Sanhedrin, XI 1–2.
22. Exod. 21:15 and 17. Cf. also Lev. 20:9. 23. Cf. Deut. 21:18–21.
24. Cf. Exod. 21:16; Deut. 24:7. 25. Cf. Exod. 22:1.
26. Cf. Mishnah, Sanhedrin, VIII 6.

Law will need in every time and place – as far as some of them are concerned – to be added to or subtracted from according to the diversity of places, happenings, and conjunctures of circumstances, He forbade adding to them or subtracting from them, saying: *Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*[27] For this might have led to the corruption of the rules of the Law and to the belief that the latter did not come from God. Withal He permitted the men of knowledge of every period, I refer to the *Great Court of Law*, to take precautions with a view to consolidating the ordinances of the Law by means of regulations in which they innovate with a view to repairing fissures, and to perpetuate these precautionary measures according to what has been said by [the Sages]: *Build a hedge for the Torah.*[28] Similarly they were permitted in certain circumstances or with a view to certain events to abolish certain actions prescribed by the Law or to permit some of the things forbidden by it; but these measures may not be perpetuated, as we have explained in the Introduction to the Commentary on the *Mishnah* in speaking of *temporary decisions*. Through this kind of governance | the Law remains one, and one is governed in every time and with a view to every happening in accordance with that happening. If, however, every man of knowledge had been permitted to engage in this speculation concerning particulars, the people would have perished because of the multiplicity of the differences of opinion and the subdivisions of doctrines. Consequently He, may He be exalted, has forbidden all the men of knowledge with the single exception of the *Great Court of Law* to undertake this, and has those who disagree with [this Court] killed. For if it could be opposed by everyone who engages in speculation, the intended purpose would be annulled and the usefulness of these regulations abolished.

Know that with regard to the perpetration of things forbidden by the Law there are four categories: the first being that of the *compelled transgressor;* the second that of the *inadvertent transgressor;* the third that of the *deliberate transgressor;* the fourth that of *him who transgresses in a high-handed manner.*[29]

As for the *compelled transgressor*, it is stated textually that he should not be punished and that no sin whatever lies upon him. For He, may He be exalted, says: *But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death.*[30]

As for the *inadvertent transgressor*, he sins, for if he had made efforts to be firm and cautious there would have been no *inadvertence* on his part. But he is not to be punished in any way, though he *needs atonement* and

27. Deut. 13:1. 28. Mishnah, Aboth, I 1. 29. Cf. Num. 15:30. 30. Deut. 22:26.

hence must *bring a sacrifice*. In this case the *Torah* distinguishes between *a private individual, a king, a High Priest*,[31] and a man qualified to give decisions on points of the Law. From this we learn that everyone who accomplishes an action or gives a decision on a point of the Law in accordance with a doctrine established by his own efforts, belongs, if he is not the *Great Court of Law* or the *High Priest*, to the class of *deliberate transgressors* and is not regarded as being among the *inadvertent transgressors*. Therefore a *rebellious elder* is killed even though he has acted and given decisions on points of the Law in accordance with a doctrine established by his own efforts. The *Great Court of Law*, however, have the right to establish a doctrine by their own effort. Accordingly if they are mistaken, they are held to have been so *inadvertently*; as He, may He be exalted, says: *And if the whole congregation of Israel shall err, and so on.*[32] Because of this fundamental principle [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, say: *An inadvertent mistake in doctrine is considered as a deliberate transgression*,[33] meaning that one who, while being deficient in doctrine, gives decisions on points of the Law and acts in accordance with this deficiency is regarded as a *deliberate transgressor*. | For the status of one who eats a piece of fat from the kidneys thinking that it is fat from the rump is not like the status of one who eats fat from the kidneys knowing what it is, but without knowing that it is one of the forbidden fats. For the latter, though he may offer an atoning sacrifice is *close to being a deliberate transgressor;* and he is this merely by acting in this manner. But one who gives decisions on points of the Law in accordance with his ignorance is indubitably a *deliberate transgressor;* for the text [of the Law] excuses a mistake in a decision on a point of the Law in the case of the *Great Court of Law* only.[34]

As for the *deliberate transgressor*, he must undergo the punishment prescribed by the text, namely, either *death by order of a court of law* or a *flogging* or *blows* [in punishment] *for insubordination in the case of transgressions not punishable by flogging* or a fine. As for those *transgressions* in the case of which *inadvertence* and *deliberation* are considered to have an equal status, this is done because they occur often and with ease, being committed by means of words and not of deeds; I refer to *the oath concerning testimony*[35] and *the oath concerning deposit*.[36] Similarly sexual intercourse

31. Cf. Lev. 4:27–28, 22, and 3. 32. Lev. 4:13. 33. Cf. Mishnah, Aboth, IV 13.
34. The sentence may also be translated: For a mistaken text in a decision concerning a point of the Law is only excused in the case of the *Great Court of Law*.
35. I.e., the oath sworn by those summoned as witnesses by which they attest that they know nothing. Cf. Lev. 5:1; Mishnah, Shebuʿoth, IV 2–3; B.T., Shebuʿoth, 31b.
36. Cf. Lev. 5:21; Mishnah, Shebuʿoth, V 1. In this case an individual swears that he has not received that which has been entrusted to his keeping.

with a *bondmaid that is betrothed to a man*[37] is regarded as a light matter because it occurs often, inasmuch as she abandons herself because of her being neither completely a slave nor completely free, nor does she belong completely to a husband—as tradition has it when explaining this *commandment*.[38]

As for *him who transgresses in a high-handed manner*, he is a *deliberate transgressor* who acts with impudence and audacity and makes his transgression known in public. Accordingly such a one does not transgress merely because of desire or because, on account of his evil character, he wishes to obtain things that are forbidden by the Law, but in order to oppose and combat the Law. Therefore it says of him: *He reviles the Lord*.[39] He must indubitably be killed. Whoever acts in this manner does so only because of an opinion formed by him, in virtue of which he is opposed to the Law. Because of this the traditional interpretation[40] states: *The Scripture speaks about idolatry*;[41] for the latter is the opinion opposed to the foundation of the Law. For | a star cannot ever be worshipped except by one who believes that it is eternal a parte ante, as we have explained several times in our compilations. To my mind, the same applies in the case of every transgression in which the wish to ruin and oppose the Law manifests itself. To my mind, if an individual belonging to *Israel* would eat *meat with milk* or would *wear* [a garment of] *mingled stuff* or *round the corners of his head* because he holds these prescriptions in slight esteem in view of an opinion of his that makes it evident that he does not believe in the truth of this legislation, he would in my opinion *revile the Lord* and ought to be put to death as an infidel and not in order to punish him for his transgression—just *as the inhabitants of a town led astray* are put to death as infidels and not in order to punish them for their transgressions; therefore their property is burnt and does not belong to their heirs, as in the case of *the others sentenced to death by a court of law*. I shall say the same about every community of *Israelites* who decide unanimously to transgress any *commandment* whatever and *act high-handedly*—all of them shall be put to death. You may know this from the story of *the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad*, about whom it is said: *And the whole congregation decided to go up to war against them*.[42] Then it was made clear to them in the *warning* that they had committed an act of infidelity through agreeing unanimously to perpetrate this *transgression*

37. Cf. Lev. 19:20–21; Mishnah, Kerithoth, II 2; B.T., Kerithoth, 9a.
38. Cf. Mishnah, Kerithoth, II 5; B.T., Kerithoth, 11a. 39. Num. 15:30.
40. Of the verse that has just been quoted. 41. Cf. B.T., Kerithoth, 7b.
42. Josh. 22:12. The quotation, as given by Maimonides, is not quite accurate.

and had thereby apostatized from religion as a whole. This is the meaning of what they[43] said to them: *To turn away this day from following the Lord.*[44] They,[45] on the other hand, replied: *If it be in rebellion, and so on.*[46] Grasp these principles also with regard to penalties.

The *Book of Judges* includes also the commandment to destroy *the seed of ᶜAmaleq*, for one particular tribe or nation[47] ought to be punished, just as one particular individual is punished, so that all tribes should be deterred and should not co-operate in doing evil. For they will say: Lest be done to us what was done to the sons of such and such a man.[48] Thus even if there should grow up among them a wicked corrupt man who does not care about the wickedness of his soul and does not think of the wickedness of his action, he will not find | a helper of his own tribe to help him in the wicked things whose realization he desires. Accordingly it was commanded that *ᶜAmaleq*, who hastened to use the sword, should be exterminated by the sword. On the other hand, *ᶜAmmon* and *Moab*, who acted in a vile manner and caused harm by means of a stratagem, were punished only by the prohibition against becoming related to them through marriage, by being considered worthless, and by their friendship being shunned. All these matters belong to the divine estimation of penalties, so that these should not be too great or too small, as He, may He be exalted, has made it clear: *According to his wickedness.*[49]

This *book*[50] also includes the commandment *to prepare a* [secluded] *place and a paddle.*[51] For one of the purposes of this Law consists, as I have made known to you, in cleanliness and avoidance of excrements and of dirt and in man's not being like the beasts. And this *commandment* also fortifies, by means of the actions it enjoins, the certainty of the combatants that the *Indwelling* has descended among them—as is explained in the reason given for it: *For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp.*[52] It has also included another notion, saying: *That He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee,*[53] this being against that which, as is well known, is widespread among soldiers in a camp after they have stayed for a long time away from their homes. Accordingly He, may He be exalted, has commanded us to perform actions that make call to mind that the *Indwelling* has descended among us so that we should be preserved from those actions, and has said: *Therefore shall thy camp be holy; that He see no unclean thing*

43. The Children of Israel. 44. Josh. 22:16. 45. The sons of Reuben and of Gad.
46. Josh. 22:22. 47. Or: religious community.
48. I.e., to the tribe that was punished. 49. Deut. 25:2.
50. I.e., the Book of Judges of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, or Deuteronomy.
51. Cf. Deut. 23:13–14. 52. Deut. 23:15. 53. Deut. 23:15.

in thee, and so on.[54] He has even commanded that a man *who has polluted himself by night* should go out of the camp *until the sun sets; and afterward he may come into the camp.*[55] Accordingly everyone should have in his mind that the camp is *like a Sanctuary of the Lord* and not like the camps of the *Gentiles* destined only to destroy and to do wrong and to harm the others and to rob them of their property. On the contrary, our purpose is to make people apt to obey God and to introduce order | into their circumstances. I have already made it known to you that I shall give reasons for the [biblical] text according to its external meaning.

This *book*[56] also includes the *law concerning the beautiful* [captive] *woman.*[57] You know their dictum: [*Here*] *the Torah only speaks in consideration of concupiscence.*[58] Nevertheless this *commandment* includes an exhortation to noble moral qualities, which excellent men must acquire in a way I shall indicate. For though *his concupiscence overcomes him* and patience is impossible for him, he must obligatorily bring her to a hidden place; as it says: *Home to thine house.*[59] And as [the Sages] have explained, he is not permitted *to do her violence during the war.*[60] And he is not allowed sexual intercourse with her for the second time before her grief has calmed down and her sorrow has been quieted. And she should not be forbidden to grieve, to be disheveled, and to weep; as the text says: *And she shall bewail her father and her mother, and so on.*[61] For those who grieve find solace in weeping and in arousing their sorrow until their bodily forces are too tired to bear this affection of the soul; just as those who rejoice find solace in all kinds of play. Therefore the Law has had pity on her[62] and gave her the possibility to do so until she is weary of weeping and of grieving. You know that he can have sexual intercourse with her *while she is still a Gentile.* She may also, for thirty days in public, profess her religion, even *in an idolatrous cult,* and may not during that period be taken to task because of a belief. Withal if he does not succeed afterwards to convert her to the statutes of the Law, she may not be sold or treated as a slave. For the Law safeguards her inviolability on account of her having shown herself naked in sexual intercourse, even if this has happened through a certain act of disobedience — I refer to her having then been a *Gentile* — and says

54. Deut. 23:15.
55. Cf. Deut. 23:11–12; Lev. 15:16. The Hebrew phrase following the semicolon appears in Lev. 14:8 and Num. 19:7. However, these two passages do not refer to the case mentioned here by Maimonides.
56. I.e., the Book of Judges of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, or Deuteronomy.
57. Cf. Deut. 21:10–14. 58. B.T., Qiddushin, 21b. 59. Deut. 21:12.
60. Cf. B.T., Qiddushin, 22a. 61. Deut. 21:13. 62. I.e., on the captive woman.

withal: *Thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.*[63] Accordingly it has become clear that this *commandment* contains encouragement to a noble moral quality. The reasons for all the *commandments* contained in this *book*[64] have accordingly become clear. |

CHAPTER 42

The *commandments* comprised in the seventh class are the laws concerning property; they are those that we have enumerated in a portion of the *Book of Judgments* and in a portion of the *Book of Acquisition*. All of them have an evident reason. For they consist in an estimation of the laws of justice with regard to the transactions that of necessity occur between people and see to it that these do not deviate from a course of mutual help useful for both parties, lest one of them should aim at increasing his share in the whole and at being the gainer in all respects.

First and foremost there should be no swindling in buying and selling, and only the usual and habitually recognized profits should be sought.[1] Conditions have been laid down under which the contract becomes valid, and swindling, even if it consists in mere words, has been forbidden, as is well known.

Then there is the *law of four trustees*.[2] It is manifest in what way it is just and equitable. For the *trustee* who keeps a deposit *gratuitously* and derives no advantage whatever from this business and merely exercises charity is *not responsible for anything*, and every accident that may happen is borne by the purse of the owner of the property. A *borrower* who has all the advantage, whereas the owner of the property exercises charity with regard to him, is *responsible for everything*, and all accidents that may happen are paid for out of the purse of the *borrower*. As for him who takes charge of a deposit in *consideration of a salary* and *the lessor*, each one of them, I mean *the trustee* and *the owner of the property*, participates in the advantage; therefore damages from accidents are divided between them. Those that are due to lack of care in keeping watch are paid for out of the purse of the *trustee* as when the thing is *stolen* or *lost*, for | the fact of *theft*

63. Deut. 21:14.
64. I.e., the Book of Judges of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, or Deuteronomy.
1. Cf. Lev. 25:14–17. 2. Cf. Exod. 22:6–14.

or *loss* shows that he had neglected measures of great prudence and exceeding precautions. On the other hand, damages from such accidents as can be prevented by no device – as when the beast that has been lent is *crippled* or *carried off* or *died*, that is, when *circumstances are beyond one's control* – are borne by the purse of the owner of the property.

Then exceeding kindness is shown to the hired man because of his poverty, and it has been commanded that he receive his wages promptly and that he should in no way be cheated out of his due; I mean that he should be recompensed according to the value of his service.[3] It is a matter of pity for him that he or even a beast must not be prevented from eating some of the food on which they work, according to the statutes of this Law.[4]

The statutes concerning property also comprise inheritance. Herein is involved an excellent moral quality, I mean that a man should not withhold a good thing from one deserving it. Accordingly when he is going to die, he should not begrudge his heir and squander his property. On the contrary, he should leave it to him who among all the people deserves it most, namely, to his next of kin: *Unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family*.[5] As is well known, it is explained that this is first of all the child, then the brother, then the paternal uncle.[6] And he should grant preference to the eldest of his children because his love for him came first, and he should not follow his inclination: *He may not make the son of the beloved [wife] the first-born, and so on*.[7] This most just Law safeguards and fortifies[8] this moral quality – I refer to taking care of relatives and protecting them. You know what the prophet says: *But he that is cruel afflicts his own kinsman*;[9] and the text of the *Torah* when speaking of alms: *Unto thy brother, to thy poor, and so on*.[10] And the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, praise very much the character of the individual *who causes his relatives to be close to him and who marries his sister's daughter*.[11]

The *Torah* has taught us that one must go exceedingly far indeed in the exercise of this moral quality. Namely, man ought to take care of his relative and grant very strong preference to the bond of the womb. Even if his relative should do him an injustice and a wrong and | should be extremely corrupt, he must nevertheless regard his kinsman with a protective eye. He, may He be exalted, says: *Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother*.[12] Similarly everyone of whom you have had need some day,

3. Cf. Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14–15. 4. Cf. Deut. 23:25. 5. Num. 27:11.
6. Cf. Num. 27:8–10. 7. Deut. 21:16.
8. Or: is fortified by. Or, according to another reading: perpetuates.
9. Prov. 11:17. 10. Deut. 15:11. 11. B.T., Yebamoth, 62b.
12. Deut. 23:8.

everyone who was useful to you and whom you found in a time of stress, even if afterwards he treated you ill, ought necessarily to have merit attaching to him because of the past. He, may He be exalted, says: *Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because thou wast a stranger in his land.*[13] And it is generally known how greatly *the Egyptians vexed us*[14] afterwards.

See then how many noble moral qualities we learn from these commandments. The two last mentioned do not belong to this seventh class. But speaking of the care to be taken of relatives in inheritance, we went on to mention *the Egyptian and the Edomite.*

CHAPTER 43

The *commandments* comprised in the eighth class are the *commandments* that we have enumerated in the *Book of Times.*[1] The [biblical] text gives the reasons for all of them except a few.

With regard to the Sabbath, the reason for it is too well known to have need of being explained, for it is known how great a rest it procures. Because of it the seventh part of the life of every individual consists in pleasure and repose from the fatigue and weariness from which there is no escape either for the young or for the old. At the same time it perpetuates throughout the periods of time an opinion whose value is very great, namely, the assertion that the world has been produced in time.

The *fast* [of the Day] *of Atonement* has also an evident reason consisting in establishing the notion of *repentance.* It is the day on which the Master of the prophets descended with the *second Tables* [of the Law] and brought them the good news that their | great sin was forgiven. This day became forever a day of repentance exclusively consecrated to divine service. Therefore one must abstain on it from all corporeal pleasure and from all effort with a view to what is useful to the body—I mean from work in various crafts—and confine oneself to *confessions*—I mean to confessing one's sins and to turning away from them.

The *festivals* are all for rejoicings and pleasurable gatherings, which in most cases are indispensable for man; they are also useful in the establishment of friendship, which must exist among people living in political societies. There is a particular reason for every one of these days.

13. Deut. 23:8. 14. Cf. Num. 20:15.
1. Or: *Seasons.*

The account of *Passover* is generally known. It lasts for seven days, for the period of seven days is a mean between the natural day and the lunar month. You know already that this period plays a great role in natural matters. It does so likewise in matters pertaining to the Law. For the Law always tends to assimilate itself to nature, perfecting the natural matters in a certain respect. For nature is not endowed with thought and understanding, whereas the Law is the determining ruling and the governance of the deity, who grants the intellect to all its possessers. This, however, is not the purpose of this chapter. We shall accordingly return to the matter with which we are dealing at present.

The [Festival of] *Weeks* is the day of the *giving of the Torah.* In order to glorify and exalt that day, the days are counted from the first of the festivals up to it, as is done by one who waits for the coming of the human being he loves best and counts the days and the hours. This is the reason for *the counting of the ᶜOmer*[2] from the day when they left Egypt till the day of the *giving of the Torah*, which was the purpose and the end of their leaving: *And brought you unto Myself.*[3] This great gathering only lasted one day; accordingly | it is commemorated every year during one day only. If, however, the eating of *unleavened bread* would only last for one day, we would not take notice of it and its meaning would not be made clear. For man often eats one kind of food for two or three days. Accordingly the meaning of [the eating of unleavened bread] only becomes clear and the account with which it is connected only becomes generally known through its being eaten for a complete period.

New Year lasts similarly for one day. For it is a day of repentance in which the attention of the people is called to their negligence. Therefore the *shophar* [*horn*] is blown on it, as we have explained in *Mishneh Torah.*[4] It is, as it were, a preparation for, and introduction to, *the Day of the Fast* [of Atonement]. Accordingly it is generally accepted in the tradition of the religious community[5] that *the ten days from New Year to the Day of Atonement* should be observed.

The [Festival of] *Tabernacles*, which aims at rejoicing and gladness, lasts for seven days, so that its meaning be generally known. The reason for its taking place in the season in question is explained in the *Torah: When thou gatherest in thy labors out of the field;*[6] this refers to the season of leisure when one rests from necessary labors. In the ninth book of the

2. The sheaf of the wave-offering; cf. Lev. 23:15. 3. Exod. 19:4.
4. Cf. Teshubah, III 4. 5. Or: the nation. 6. Exod. 23:16.

"Ethics,"[7] Aristotle states that this was the general practice of the religious communities in ancient times. He says literally: The ancient sacrifices and gatherings used to take place after the harvesting of the fruit. They were, as it were, offerings given because of leisure. This is literally what he says. In addition, it is possible to live in the *tabernacle* during that season, there being no great heat nor an uncomfortable rain. Both these festivals, I mean *Tabernacles* and *Passover*, inculcate both an opinion and a moral quality. In the case of *Passover*, the opinion consists in the commemoration of the *miracles of Egypt* and in the perpetuation of their memory throughout the periods of time. In the case of *Tabernacles*, the opinion consists in the perpetuation of the memory of the *miracles* of the *desert* throughout the periods of time. As for the moral quality, it consists in man's always remembering the days | of stress in the days of prosperity, so that his gratitude to God should become great and so that he should achieve humility and submission. Accordingly *unleavened bread* and *bitter herbs* must be eaten on *Passover* in commemoration of what happened to us. Similarly one must leave the houses[8] and dwell in tabernacles, as is done by the wretched inhabitants of deserts and wastelands, in order that the fact be commemorated that such was our state in ancient times: *That I made the children of Israel dwell in tabernacles, and so on.*[9] From this we went over to dwell in richly ornamented houses in the best and most fertile place on earth, thanks to the benefaction of God and His promises to our fathers, inasmuch as they were perfect people in their opinions and in their moral character – I mean *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* For this too is one of the pivots of the Law, I mean the belief that every benefit that will be or has been granted is *due to the merit of the Fathers*, since *they kept the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment.*[10]

One's going over from *Tabernacles* to a second festival, I mean to the *Eighth Day of Assembly*, can be accounted for by the consideration that in this way one can complete such rejoicings as are impossible in *tabernacles* but only possible in spacious dwellings and in buildings.

As for the *four species that constitute a lulab*,[11] the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, have set forth some reason for this in the manner of *Midrashim*[12] whose method is well known by all those who understand

7. In fact, the passage occurs in Book VIII (1160a25–28) of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.
8. During the Feast of Tabernacles. 9. Lev. 23:43. 10. Cf. Gen. 18:19.
11. In this passage the Hebrew word apparently means any bunch composed of four plants. The four species alluded to are the branches of the palm tree, the citron, the myrtle, and the willows of the brook.
12. Here and in the following passages, the term *Midrashim* is substituted for the word *derashoth* used by Maimonides.

their discourses. For these [namely, the Midrashim] have, in their opinion, the status of poetical conceits; they are not meant to bring out the meaning of the text in question. Accordingly, with regard to the *Midrashim*, people are divided into two classes: A class that imagines that [the Sages] have said these things in order to explain the meaning of the text in question, and a class that holds [the Midrashim] in slight esteem and holds them up to ridicule, since it is clear and manifest that this is not the meaning of the [biblical] text in question. The first class strives and fights with a view to proving, as they deem, the correctness of the *Midrashim* and to defending them, | and think that this is the true meaning of the [biblical] text and that the *Midrashim* have the same status as the traditional legal decisions. But neither of the two groups understands that [the Midrashim] have the character of poetical conceits whose meaning is not obscure for someone endowed with understanding. At that time this method was generally known and used by everybody, just as the poets use poetical expressions. Thus [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, say: *Bar Qappara teaches: [In the verse –] And thou shalt have a paddle [yathed] upon azenekha [thy weapon]*[13] *– do not read azenekha, but aznekha [thy ear]. This teaches us that whenever a man hears a reprehensible thing, he should put his finger into his ear.*[14] Would that I knew whether, in the opinion of these ignoramuses, this *Tannaite* believed this to be the interpretation of this text, that such was the purpose of this *commandment*, that *yathed [paddle]* means a finger, and that *azenekha [thy weapon]* refers to the two ears. I do not think that anyone of sound intellect will be of this opinion. But this is a most witty poetical conceit by means of which he instills a noble moral quality, which is in accordance with the fact that just as it is forbidden to tell them, so is it forbidden to listen to obscene things; and he props it up through a reference to a [biblical] text, as is done in poetical compositions. Similarly all the passages in the *Midrashim* enjoining, *Do not read thus, but thus*, have this meaning. I have deviated from the subject, but this is a useful observation that may be needed by everyone endowed with intellect among those who profess the Law and are Rabbanites.[15] I will return to the order of our discourse. What seems to me regarding the *four species that constitute a lulab*[16] is that they are indicative of the joy and gladness [felt by the Children of Israel] when they left the *desert* – which was *no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither was there any water to drink*[17] – for places in which there

13. Deut. 23:14. 14. B.T., Kethuboth, 15a.
15. This term is probably used in contradistinction to the term Qaraites.
16. Cf. n. 11, this chap. 17. Num. 20:5.

were fruit-bearing trees and rivers. For the purpose of commemoration, the finest fruit of these places was taken and the one that was most fragrant, as well as their finest leaves and finest verdure, I mean *the willows of the brook*. Three things are found in common in these *four species*. | The first one is that at that time they were plentiful in the *Land of Israel* so that everyone could procure them. The second one is that they are beautiful to look at and full of freshness; and some of them, namely, the *citron* and the *myrtle*, have an excellent fragrance, while the *branches of the palm tree* and the *willow* have neither a good nor an offensive smell. The third one is that they keep fresh for seven days, which is not the case with peaches, pomegranates, asparagus, pears, and the like.

CHAPTER 44

The *commandments* comprised in the ninth class are the *commandments* that we have enumerated in the *Book of Love*. All of them have manifest reasons and evident causes. I mean that the end of these actions pertaining to divine service is the constant commemoration of God, the love of Him and the fear of Him, the obligatory observance of the *commandments* in general, and the bringing-about of such belief concerning Him, may He be exalted, as is necessary for everyone professing the Law. Those commandments are: prayer, the *recital of Shema*ᶜ,[1] the *blessing of food*[2] and what is connected with it, the *blessing of the Priests*,[3] *phylacteries*,[4] the *inscription on the posts of the houses and on the gates*,[5] acquiring a *book of the Torah* and reading in it at certain times.[6] All these are actions that bring about useful opinions. This is clear and manifest and does not require another discourse, for that would be nothing but repetition.

1. I.e., the recital of the passage (Deut. 6:4 ff.) that begins: *Shemaᶜ Yisrael* (Hear, O Israel).
2. I.e., the recital of grace. Cf. Deut. 8:10. 3. Cf. Num. 6:23–26.
4. Cf. Exod. 13:9 and 16; Deut. 6:8; 11:18. 5. *mezuzah*. Cf. Deut. 6:9; 11:20.
6. According to rabbinic tradition, this last commandment may be deduced from Deut. 31:19. Cf. Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Sepher Torah, VII 1.

CHAPTER 45

The *commandments* comprised in the tenth class are those that | we have enumerated in *Laws concerning the Chosen Temple*, *Laws concerning the Utensils of the Sanctuary and Those Who Work in It*, and *Laws concerning Entry into the Sanctuary*. We have already made known in a general way the utility of this class of commandments.

It is known that *idolaters* sought to build their temples and to set up their idols in the highest places they could find there: *Upon the high mountains.*[1] Therefore *Abraham our Father* singled out *Mount Moriah*, because of its being the highest mountain there, proclaimed upon it the unity [of God], and determined and defined the direction toward which one would turn in prayer, fixing it exactly in the West. For *the Holy of Holies* is in the West. This is the meaning of the dictum of [the Sages]: *The Indwelling is in the West.*[2] They, *may their memory be blessed*, have made clear in the *Gemara* of the Tractate *Yoma*[3] that *Abraham our Father* fixed the direction toward which one should turn in prayer, I mean *the Temple of the Holy of Holies.* In my opinion, the reason for this is as follows: Inasmuch as at that time the opinion generally accepted in the world was to the effect that the sun should be worshipped and that it is the deity, there is no doubt that all men turned when praying toward the East. Therefore *Abraham our Father* turned, when praying on *Mount Moriah*—I mean in the *Sanctuary*—toward the West, so as to turn his back upon the sun. Do you not see what [the Children of] *Israel* did when they apostasized, became infidels, and returned to those ancient pernicious views? *Their backs were toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the East; and they worshipped the sun toward the East.*[4] Understand this strange thing. In my opinion there is also no doubt that the place singled out by *Abraham* in virtue of prophetic inspiration was known to *Moses our Master* and to many others. For *Abraham* had recommended to them that that place should be a house of worship, just as the translator[5] sets forth when he says:[6] *Abraham worshipped and prayed in that place and said before the Lord: Here will worship the generations, and so on.* The fact that this place is not stated explicitly

1. Deut. 12:2. 2. B.T., Baba Bathra, 25a.
3. No explicit passage to this effect has been found in this tractate of the Babylonian Talmud. Maimonides may be referring to pages 28b and 54b where certain passages may be interpreted in the way suggested in the text.
4. Ezek. 8:16. 5. I.e., Onqelos. 6. In his Aramaic paraphrase of Gen. 22:14.

when mentioned in the *Torah* | and not designated, but only hinted at by means of the words, *Which the Lord shall choose, and so on*,[7] is due in my opinion to three wise considerations. The first is, lest nations[8] should hold fast to the place and fight for it with great violence, knowing as they do that this place is the final purpose of the Law on earth. The second is, lest those who then owned the place ravage and devastate it to the limit of their power. The third, and it is the strongest, lest every *tribe* should demand that this place be *within its allotted portion* and should seek to conquer it, which would lead to conflict and sedition, such as happened with regard to the *priesthood*. Therefore the command was given that the *Chosen Temple* should only be built after the *elevation of a King*, so that only one would be qualified to give commands and quarrels would cease, as we have explained in the *Book of Judges*.[9]

It is known that these people[10] built temples for the stars and that in that temple an idol whose worship was agreed upon was set up, I mean an idol assigned to a certain star or to a portion of a Sphere. Consequently we were commanded to build a temple for Him, may He be exalted, and place in it the *ark* within which were the *two Tables* containing the words *I* [am the Lord] and *Thou shalt not have*.

It is known that the fundamental principle of belief in prophecy precedes the belief in the Law. For if there is no prophet, there can be no Law. The prophet receives prophetic revelation only through the intermediary of the *angel*. Thus: *And the angel of the Lord called;*[11] *And the angel of the Lord said unto her*.[12] This occurs innumerable times. Even in the case of *Moses our Master*, his prophetic mission is inaugurated *through an angel: And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord in the heart of fire*.[13] Consequently it has been made clear that that belief in the existence of angels precedes the belief in prophecy, and the belief in prophecy precedes the belief in the Law.

As the Sabians were ignorant of the existence of the deity, may He be exalted and glorified, and thought that | the Sphere with its stars is the being that is eternal and to which nonbeing can never come, and that forces flow over from the Sphere toward idols and certain trees—I mean the *asheroth*—they thought that the idols and the trees give prophetic revelation to the prophets, speak to them in the course of such a revelation, and make known to them what is useful and what is harmful, according to their

7. Cf. e.g., Deut. 16:6. 8. The pagan peoples are meant.
9. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, Melakhim, I 1–2. 10. I.e., the idolaters.
11. Gen. 22:15. 12. Gen. 16:9, 10, and 11.
13. Exod. 3:2. The verse's word order is altered somewhat by Maimonides.

doctrines that we have explained to you with reference to *the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Asherah.*[14] Thereupon when the truth became clear to the men of knowledge and it became known by demonstration that there is a being that is neither a body nor a force in a body, who is the true deity, and that He is one; and that there are also other beings that are separate from matter and are not bodies, being toward whom His being, may He be exalted, overflows – namely, the angels, as we have explained;[15] and that all these beings are beyond the Sphere and its stars; – it became known with certainty that true prophetic revelation is given to the prophets by the angels, not by the idols and the *asheroth.* Thus it has become clear through what we have stated before that the belief in the existence of angels is consequent upon the belief in the existence of the deity and that thereby prophecy and the Law are established as valid. In order to fortify belief in this fundamental principle, He, may He be exalted, has commanded that the image of *two angels* be made over the *ark,* so that the belief of the multitude in the existence of angels be consolidated; this correct opinion, coming in the second place after the belief in the existence of the deity, constituting the originative principle of belief in prophecy and the Law and refuting *idolatry,* as we have explained. If there had been one image, I mean the image of *one cherub,* this might have been misleading. For it might have been thought that this was the image of the deity who was to be worshipped – such things[16] being done by the *idolaters* – or that there was only one individual angel, a belief that would have led to a certain dualism.[17] As, however, *two cherubim* were made and the explicit statement enounced: *The Lord is our God, the Lord is one,*[18] the validity | of the opinion affirming the existence of angels was established and also the fact that they are many. Thus measures were taken against the error that they are the deity – the deity being one and having created this multiplicity.

Thereupon a *candlestick* was placed in front of it[19] in order to glorify and honor the Temple. For the Temple, which was always illumined by lamps and separated by means of a veil [from the Holy of Holies], made a great impression upon the soul. You know to what extent the Law fortifies the belief in the greatness of the *Sanctuary* and the awe felt for it, so that on seeing it, man should be affected by a sentiment of submission and servitude. It says: *And ye shall fear My Sanctuary,*[20] an injunction that He has

14. Cf. III 29. 15. Cf. I 49 and II 6.
16. I.e., the worship of an image because of its being the image of the deity.
17. The two deities being God and one angel. 18. Deut. 6:4.
19. Apparently in front of the ark. 20. Lev. 19:30.

coupled with the precept *to keep the Sabbath* in order to strengthen *fear of the Sanctuary*.

The need for *the altar for incense* and *the altar for burnt-offering* and for their utensils is manifest.

As for the *table* and the bread that was always to be upon it,[21] I do not know the reason for this and I have not found up to now something to which I might ascribe this practice.

As for the prohibition against hewing the stones of the *altar*,[22] you know the reason [the Sages] have given for this in their dictum: *It is not fitting for that which shortens [human life] to be lifted up against that which prolongs it*.[23] This is excellent in the manner of the *Midrashim*,[24] as we have mentioned. However, the reason for this is manifest, for the *idolaters* used to build altars with hewn stones. Accordingly assimilation to them was prohibited, and in order to avoid this assimilation to them it was commanded that the *altar* be of earth. It says: *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me*.[25] If, however, it was indispensable to make it with stones, the latter must have their natural form and not be hewn. Similarly it is forbidden to set up a *figured stone* and to plant a tree *beside the altar*.[26] In all this there is one and the same purpose, namely, that we should not worship God in the form of the particular cults[27] practiced by them with regard to the objects of their worship; and this is the meaning of the prohibition in general. It says: *How | did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise*.[28] The meaning is that one must not act in this way with regard to God for the reason that it states: *For every abomination to the Lord which He hateth, have they done unto their gods, and so on*.[29]

You know likewise how widespread was the worship of *Pe'or* in those times, and that it consisted in the uncovering of the nakedness.[30] Therefore it commands the *Priests* to make themselves breeches *to cover the flesh of their nakedness*[31] during the *divine service*. Nevertheless they were commanded not to go up to the *altar* by steps: *That thy nakedness be not uncovered thereon*.[32]

As for the duty constantly *to keep watch* over the *Sanctuary* and to go around it, this was commanded in order to glorify and honor it, so that the ignorant, the unclean, and those who are in a disheveled state should not

21. Cf. Exod. 25:23–30. 22. Cf. Exod. 20:22; Deut. 27:5.
23. Mishnah, Middoth, III 4. 24. In the text: *derashoth*.
25. Exod. 20:24 (v. 21 in some translations). 26. Cf. Lev. 26:1; Deut. 16:21.
27. The cults were particular because they did not have in view the universal deity.
28. Deut. 12:30. 29. Deut. 12:31. 30. Cf. Num. 25:3. 31. Exod. 28:42.
32. Exod. 20:26 (v. 23 in some translations).

rush up to it, as shall be explained. For one of the things that necessarily resulted in an exaltation and glorification of the *Sanctuary*, bringing about in us *fear* of it, was the prohibition against drunken, unclean, and disheveled individuals—I mean *those with unkempt hair and torn garments*—entering it, together with the commandment that everyone *engaged in the divine service shall sanctify his hands and his feet.*

Also in order to exalt the Temple, the rank of its servants was exalted, the *Priests* and *Levites* were singled out, and the *Priests* wore the most splendid, finest, and most beautiful garments: *Holy garments . . . for splendor and for beauty.*[33] And it was commanded that *someone who has a blemish* should not be employed in the *divine service*; not only one who is afflicted with an infirmity, but also those afflicted with deformities *are disqualified from being Priests,*[34] as is explained in the regulations of legal science dealing with this *commandment.*[35] For to the multitude an individual is not rendered great by his true form,[36] but by the perfection of his limbs and the beauty of his clothes; and what is aimed at is that the Temple and its servants should be regarded as great by all.

As for the *son of Levi*, he did not sacrifice and was not imagined as imploring forgiveness for sin, as is stated with regard to the *Priests*:[37] *And he shall make atonement for him; And he shall make atonement for her.* But the purpose of the *Levite* consisted in *singing* only; he | is *disqualified* [only] *because of* [his] *voice.* For the purpose of *singing* too is to bring about an affection of the soul by means of the words in question; and the soul can only be affected by means of pleasing melodies with, in addition, the accompaniment of musical instruments, as was always the case in the *Sanctuary*. Even the *Priests* who were *fit* [for the divine service] and who sojourned in the *Sanctuary* were forbidden to sit down in it, to enter into the Temple at every moment, and ever to enter *the Holy of Holies*, except the *High Priest* who entered it on the *Day of Atonement*—four times, not more. All this was to exalt the *Sanctuary*.

Inasmuch as many beasts were slaughtered daily in that holy place, the flesh cut into pieces, and the intestines burnt[38] and washed, there is no doubt that if it had been left in that state its smell would have been like that of a slaughterhouse. Therefore it was commanded in regard to it that *incense be burnt* there twice daily *in the morning and in the afternoon* in order to improve its smell and the smell of the clothes of all who served

33. Exod. 28:2. 34. Cf. Lev. 21:16–21. 35. Cf. Mishnah, Bekhoroth, VII.
36. I.e., the rational soul or the intellect. 37. Lev. 4:26; 12:8.
38. Cf. Lev. 1:6–9

there. You know their dictum: *The odor of the incense was smelt even in Jericho.*[39] This also preserved *fear of the Sanctuary*. For if it had not had a pleasant smell, and all the more if the contrary were the case, the result would have been the opposite of glorification. For the soul is greatly solaced and attracted by pleasant smells and shrinks from stench and avoids it.

As for the *anointing oil*,[40] it has two useful functions: it gives a pleasant smell to whatever is anointed with it, and induces the belief that the anointed object is great, sanctified, and distinguished beyond other things of the same species, regardless of whether the thing is a human individual or a garment or a vessel. All this redounds to *fear of the Sanctuary*, which is a cause of *fear of the Lord*. For when one came there the soul was affected, so that hard hearts were softened and touched. | For the deity *with far-away counsels*[41] devised this gracious ruse in order that they be softened and become submissive when they came to the Temple, so that they accept God's guiding commands and fear Him, as is explained to us in the text of the *Torah: And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which He shall choose to cause His name to dwell there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herd and of thy flock; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.*[42] Thus the intended purpose of all these actions, whatever they may be, has become clear to you.

The reason for the prohibition against imitating the *anointing oil* and the *incense* is most clear. This was forbidden in order that this odor be smelt only there, so that it should produce a stronger affection in them, and also in order that it should not be thought that whoever was anointed with this oil or one similar to it was singled out thereby, a thought that would have produced ruin and sedition.

The fact that the *ark* had to be carried on the shoulder and not in a wagon[43] is clearly due to the intention to exalt it. Its shape ought not to be damaged, not even by moving the *staves* from the *rings*. Similarly the shape of the *ephod* and of the *breastplate* ought not to be damaged, not even by moving one from the other.[44] It was also commanded that the making of the *garments* [of the Priests] be wholly woven, not divided and cut, so that the shape of the woven object be not spoilt.

It was likewise forbidden for one individual among the servants of the *Sanctuary* to take over the function of another.[45] For slackness and negligence in all things occur when various functions are entrusted to a group

39. Mishnah, Tamid, III 8. 40. Cf. Exod. 30:22–23. 41. Isa. 25:1.
42. Deut. 14:23. 43. Cf. Num. 4:1–15; I Chron. 15:15. 44. Cf. Exod. 28:28.
45. Cf. Num. 4:19 and 49.

of people, and every individual has not his own particular work assigned to him. It is also clear that the gradation with regard to the various places[46] — in consequence of which different laws are prescribed with respect to *the Temple Mount*, to the *place between the two walls*, to the *Hall of Women*, to the *Hall*, and to *the Holy of Holies* — were all | intended to bring about additional glorification and to instill *a greater fear* into the heart of all those who came to the Temple.

We have thus set forth the reasons for all details belonging to this class.

CHAPTER 46

The *commandments* comprised in the eleventh class are those that we have enumerated in the remainder of the *Book of Divine Worship* and in the *Book of Sacrifices*. We have already set forth their utility in summary fashion. Now we shall begin to give the reasons, as we have apprehended them, for the single commandments. We shall accordingly say that the *Torah*, according to the interpretation of *Onqelos*, states literally that the Egyptians used to worship the sign of Aries and that they therefore forbade the slaughter of sheep and abominated shepherds. For it says: *Lo, if we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians;*[1] and it says: *For every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.*[2] Similarly certain sects of the Sabians worshipped the jinn and believed that they assumed the outward forms of goats and therefore called the jinn *goats*. This teaching was very widespread in the days of *Moses our Master: And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto the goats* [*seʿirim*], *and so on.*[3] Hence these sects also used to prohibit the eating of goats. As for the slaughter of oxen, nearly the majority of the *idolaters* abominated it, as all of them held this species in very great esteem. Hence you will find that up to our time the Indians do not slaughter oxen, even in countries where other species of animals are slaughtered. Thus it was in order to efface the traces of these incorrect opinions that we have been ordered by the Law to offer in sacrifices only these three species | of quadrupeds: *Ye shall bring your offering of oxen and of small cattle.*[4] In this way an action considered by them as an extreme act

46. Cf. Mishnah, Kelim, I 8–9.

1. Exod. 8:22. The verse continues: *will they not stone us?* 2. Gen. 46:34.
3. Lev. 17:7. 4. Lev. 1:2.

of disobedience was the one through which one came near to God and sought forgiveness for one's sins. Thus wrong opinions, which are diseases of the human soul, are cured by their contrary found at the other extreme.

With a view to the same purpose we have been commanded to slaughter *the paschal lamb* and to sprinkle with its blood *in Egypt* the gates from outside, so that we should manifest our rejection of these opinions, proclaim what is contrary to them, and bring forth the belief that the act, which they deemed to be a cause of destruction, saves from destruction: *And the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite.*[5] This is in recompense of their manifestation of obedience and their having put an end to the absurd things done by the *idolaters*. This is the reason for the choice of only these three species for sacrifice, over and beyond the fact that these are also domestic species that are numerous, not as is the case in the cults of the *idolaters* who sacrifice lions, bears, and other wild animals, as is mentioned in the book of Tumtum.[6]

As most people are not able to offer a *beast* in sacrifice, it was commanded that birds too should be offered up in sacrifice; namely, those among them that are most frequent in Syria and are the most excellent and the easiest to catch, namely, *turtledoves and young pigeons*. He who is not able to offer up in sacrifice even a bird, must offer bread baked in one of the various manners known at that time: either *baked in an oven* or *baked in a pan* or *baked in a frying-pan*. If baking was difficult for someone, he could offer flour.[7] All this was addressed to those who wished to offer sacrifices.

Then [Scripture] explains to us that in regard to this kind of divine service, I mean | sacrifices, no sin whatever will fall upon us if we do not perform it at all. For it says: *But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.*[8]

Inasmuch as the *idolaters* offered only leavened bread and made many offerings of sweet things and seasoned their sacrifices with honey, as is generally recognized in the books that I have mentioned to you, and thus no salt was to be found in any of their offerings, He, may He be exalted, forbade offering up *any leaven or any honey*[9] and commanded that salt always be offered: *With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.*[10]

He commanded that all the offerings be *perfect* in the most excellent condition, in order that the *sacrifice* should not come to be held in little

5. Exod. 12:23. 6. This book has been mentioned in III 29, 37, and 41.
7. Cf. Lev. 2:1–11. 8. Deut. 23:23. 9. Lev. 2:11. 10. Lev. 2:13.

esteem and that what was offered to His name, may He be exalted, be not despised. As it says: *Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee or will he accept thee?*[11]

For this reason it is also forbidden to sacrifice an animal that is not yet seven days old, for it is deficient among those of its kind and is considered disgusting, for it resembles an abortion.

This is also the reason for the prohibition against offering up *the hire of a harlot or the price of a dog*,[12] because both are considered vile.

This is also the reason for sacrificing the old of the turtledoves and the young of the pigeons, these being the best among them, for no pleasure can be taken in the old pigeons.

This is also the reason for the fact that *oblations* had to be mingled with oil and be of flour, for this is what is most perfect and most pleasant. Frankincense was chosen because of the good odor of its fumes in places filled with the odor of burnt flesh.

In order that the *sacrifice* be held in great esteem and that it not be regarded as repugnant and disgusting, it was commanded that the *burnt-offering* be flayed and its intestines and extremities washed, even though they were entirely burnt. You will find that this was a purpose that was always held in view and observed by [Scripture]: *In that ye say: The table of the Lord is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even the food thereof, is contemptible.*[13]

This is | also the reason that the *sacrifice* may not be eaten by an *uncircumcised* or *unclean* man, or if it is polluted, or *past its proper time*, or when the intention concerning it is perverted;[14] and that it should be eaten in a special place. The *burnt-offering*, which is entirely consecrated to God, should not be eaten at all. What is offered because of a sin—that is, the *sin-offering* and the *guilt-offering*—should be eaten in the *court* [of the Sanctuary] only on the day of the slaughter and on the following night. The *peace-offerings*, which are of lower dignity and of *lesser sanctity*, may be eaten in the whole of *Jerusalem*, but only in it, and also on the morrow of the day of the sacrifice, but not afterwards, for after that they are spoilt and corrupted.

Again that the *sacrifice* and everything that is consecrated to His name, may He be exalted, be held in great esteem, the prescription was given us that *everyone who has procured pleasure for himself from the Sanctuary, is guilty* and needs an *expiatory sacrifice* to be made for him and must pay

11. Mal. 1:8. 12. Deut. 23:19. 13. Mal. 1:12. 14. Cf. Lev. 7:16–21.

one fifth[15] over and above what he has taken even if he has *transgressed inadvertently*.

It is likewise not permitted to *employ consecrated animals in work* or to *shear them*; all this in order that the *sacrifice* be held in great esteem. The law concerning the *exchange* of animals was prescribed as a precautionary measure; for if it were permitted to substitute a good animal for a poor one, poor ones would have been substituted for the good ones and would have been said to be the better ones. Accordingly as to this point the rule was laid down: *It and the exchange thereof shall be holy*.[16]

With regard to our having been given the command that whoever wishes to redeem a thing from among those *consecrated by him must add one fifth*,[17] the reason thereof is manifest; for *man is close to himself*.[18] Consequently it is always his nature to be niggardly with his property; accordingly he will not inquire with care regarding the price of the *consecrated* thing and will not take great pains to present it to others so that its true price be established. Consequently recourse had to be had against him by means of the addition, so that the consecrated thing could be sold to another at its true value. All this is prescribed in order that what has been named as consecrated to God and whereby one may come near Him should not be held in little esteem.

The reason for the burning of the *Priest's oblation* is as follows: Every *Priest* could offer his sacrifice with his own hands. Accordingly if he had brought an *oblation* and eaten it himself, | it would have been tantamount to his not having offered anything at all. For only *frankincense* and a *handful* of flour were offered upon the altar from *the oblation of one private individual*.[19] If then, not content with the smallness of this *sacrifice*, he who brought it had also eaten it, no act of worship at all would have been manifested. Hence the oblation is burnt.

The particular rules concerning the *paschal lamb*, namely, that it should only be eaten *roasted by fire and in one house, neither shall ye break a bone thereof*,[20] have all a manifest reason. For just as unleavened bread is due to haste, roasting the lamb is also due to haste. For there was then no time to cook various kinds of dishes and to prepare various sorts of food. Even delay in order to break its bones and to extract what is in it was forbidden. For the gist of all this has already been mentioned, namely, in its dictum: *And ye shall eat it in haste*.[21] Now haste does not admit of the delay

15. Cf. Lev. 5:15–16. 16. Lev. 27:10 and 33.
17. Cf. Lev. 27:13, 15, 19, 27, and 31. One fifth of the value is meant.
18. Cf., e.g., B.T., Sanhedrin, 10a. 19. Cf. Lev. 2:2. 20. Exod. 12:8 and 46.
21. Exod. 12:11.

required for breaking the bones or for lending parts of them from one house to another and for waiting for the return of the messenger. All these are actions indicative of laxity and sluggishness, whereas the purpose was to make a show of haste and hurry, lest someone delay and come too late to leave [Egypt] with the multitude of the people, whereupon he would be exposed to harm and to being set upon by surprise. These circumstances were then perpetuated in order to commemorate the matter as it really was. As it says: *And thou shalt keep this statute* [*huqqah*] *in its season from year to year.*[22] The rule that [a paschal lamb] *is only eaten by those who were counted* [*with a view to partaking*] *of it,*[23] has been laid down in order to make sure that it is acquired and that no one relies in this matter upon a relative, a friend, or someone he chances to meet, but that he should take care of it from the beginning. The prohibition against *uncircumcised men* partaking of it[24] has been explained by the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* for they said[25] that during their long stay in Egypt [the Children of Israel], with a view to assimilating themselves to the Egyptians, had omitted observing the *commandment of circumcision.* When thereupon the *paschal lamb* was prescribed by the Law and the condition was posed that it should only be sacrificed by someone after | *he himself, his sons, and the members of his household had been circumcised* – for only then *could he come near and keep it*[26] – all of them were circumcised; and *the blood of circumcision* mingled with *the blood of the paschal lamb* because of the great number of men who had just undergone circumcision, as [the Sages] have mentioned. It is referred to in the dictum [of Scripture]: *Wallowing in thy blood*[27] – *the blood of the paschal lamb and the blood of circumcision.*

Know that the Sabians held that blood was most unclean, but in spite of this used to eat of it, deeming that it was the food of the devils and that, consequently, whoever ate it fraternized with the jinn so that they came to him and let him know future events – according to what the multitude imagine concerning the jinn. There were, however, people there who considered it a hard thing to eat of blood, this being a thing abhorrent to the nature of man. Accordingly they used to slaughter an animal, collect its blood in a vessel or in a ditch, and eat the flesh of this slaughtered animal close by its blood. In doing this they imagined that the jinn partook of this blood, this being their food, whereas they themselves ate the flesh. In this way fraternization was achieved, because all ate at the same table and in one and the same gathering. Consequently, as they deemed, these jinn would

22. Exod. 13:10. 23. Mishnah, Zebaḥim, V 8. 24. Cf. Exod. 12:48.
25. Cf. Exodus Rabbah, XIX. 26. Exod. 12:48. 27. Ezek. 16:6.

come to them in dreams, inform them of secret things, and be useful to them. All these were opinions that were in those times followed, favored, and generally accepted; the multitude did not doubt of their truth. Thereupon the Law, which is perfect in the opinion of those who know it, began to put an end to these inveterate diseases.[28] Consequently it prohibited the eating of blood, putting the same emphasis on this prohibition as on the prohibition against *idolatry*. For He, may He be exalted, says, *I will set My face against that soul that eateth blood, and so on*,[29] just as He has said with regard to *him who gives of his seed to Moloch:*[30] *I will even set My face against that soul, and so on.*[31] No such text occurs regarding a third *commandment* other than the prohibition of *idolatry* and of *eating of blood.* This is so because | the eating of blood led to a certain kind of *idolatry*, namely, to the worship of the jinn. [Scripture] pronounced blood to be pure and turned it into a means of purification for those who come near it: *And sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and so on; and he and his garments shall be hallowed.*[32] It also commands the sprinkling of blood upon the *altar* and causes the whole act of worship to consist in pouring it out there, not in gathering it together: *And I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement.*[33] There it was poured out according to what it says: *And all the [remaining] blood shall he pour out;*[34] and it says: *And the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the Lord thy God.*[35] And it commands pouring the blood of every beast that is slaughtered, even if it was not offered up in *sacrifice;* it says: *Thou shalt pour it out upon the earth as water.*[36] Thereupon it forbids gathering around the blood and eating there, saying: *You shall not eat round the blood.*[37] When they continued in their disobedience and in following the generally accepted usage in which they had been brought up of fraternizing with the jinn through eating around the blood, He, may He be exalted, commanded that no *meat of desire*[38] be eaten at all *in the desert*, but that all be offered up as *peace-offerings.* It is clear to us that the reason for this is that the blood should be poured out upon the altar and that people should not gather around it. Accordingly it says: *To the end that the children of Israel may bring, and so on. And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto the devils [seʿirim], and so on.*[39] But the matter of *wild beasts* and of *birds* still remained to be

28. This translation seems preferable to the one proposed in Munk's translation: "The perfect Law undertook to put an end to these rooted diseases among those who recognize it."
29. Lev. 17:10. 30. Cf. Lev. 20:4–6. 31. Lev. 20:6. 32. Exod. 29:21.
33. Lev. 17:11. 34. Lev. 4:18. 35. Deut. 12:27. 36. Deut. 12:16 and 24.
37. Lev. 19:26.
38. I.e., meat that was not consecrated and that was eaten when one wished.
39. Lev. 17:5 and 7.

settled, for *wild beasts* may not be *sacrificed* at all and *birds* may not be offered as *peace-offerings*. Consequently He, may He be exalted, commanded that when any of the *wild beasts* or *birds* whose flesh it is permitted to eat has been slaughtered, its blood should be covered up with dust[40] so that people should not gather to eat around it. Thus the aim was achieved and the purpose realized: namely, *to break the brotherhood*[41] between those truly possessed[42] and their jinn. Know that the epoch of this belief was close to the time of *Moses our Master*, that it had a great following, and that people were led astray by it. You will find that this is literally stated in the *song Haʾazinu: They sacrificed unto devils, which are not | God, to gods which they have not known, and so on.*[43] The *Sages* have explained the meaning of its dictum, *which are not God*, in that they said that they not only persisted in worshipping existent things but even imaginary ones. This is the text of *Siphre: It is not enough that they worship the sun, the moon, and the constellations, they even worship their babuʾa.*[44] The word *babuʾa* means shadow. I shall now return to what we are discussing.

Know that the *meat of desire* was only forbidden *in the desert*. For it was one of the generally accepted opinions that the jinn lived in deserts and held converse and appeared there, but did not appear in cities and cultivated places; so that whenever a townsman wished to do something in the ways of this insanity, he had to go from the city to the desert and to isolated places. Therefore the *meat of desire* became permitted after the entry into the land [of Canaan]. Also because indubitably the strength of that malady had diminished, and the number of followers of those opinions had become less. Also because it was very difficult and nearly impossible that all those who wished to eat the *meat of a* [domestic] *beast* should go to *Jerusalem*. For these reasons the *meat of desire* was only forbidden *in the desert*.

Know that the greater the sin that had been committed, the more defective was the species from which the sacrifice offered up for it was taken. Therefore only a *she-goat* is offered up for an act of *idolatry* committed *inadvertently*,[45] and *other sins of a private individual* require a *ewe-lamb* or a *she-goat*. For a female is in all species more defective than the male, and there is no sin greater than *idolatry*, and no kind more defective

40. Cf. Lev. 17:13. 41. Cf. Zech. 11:14.
42. *al-majānīn*. In ordinary Arabic usage the word means "madmen"; but it has the same root as the word *jinn* (demons) and originally designated "those possessed by jinn."
43. Deut. 32:17. Moses' song figuring in Deut. 32 begins with the word *haʾazinu* (give ear).
44. The passage of Siphre discussing the scriptural verse quoted above. In our edition the passage is somewhat different, and the word *babuʾa* does not occur in it.
45. Cf. Num. 15:27.

than a *she-goat*. Because of the king's distinguished rank, the *sacrifice* required for *his inadvertent transgression* is a *he-goat*. As for the *High Priest and congregation*,[46] *their inadvertent transgressions* do not consist merely in actions, but also in legal decisions. Hence they had the distinction that the *sacrifices* required of *them* were *bullocks*,[47] and in cases of *idolatry*, *he-goats*.[48]

Inasmuch as the sins for which a *guilt-offering* was brought | were less important than those for which a *sin-offering* was required, the *sacrifice* offered up in a *guilt-offering* was a *ram* or a *young male lamb*;[49] thus both the species and the sex have distinction, the sacrifice being a male sheep. Do you not see that the sex of the *burnt-offering*, which is entirely consecrated to God, has distinction, for it may only be male.[50] For the same reason the *oblation of a sinner* and the *oblation of an unfaithful wife*, which latter is also due to her being suspected of having committed a *sin*, are deprived of ornamental additions and of good odors; it was forbidden to offer *oil and frankincense* with them. This ornamental addition was taken away from them because those who brought these offerings were not good nor were they fine in their actions; accordingly when they made a motion toward repentance, they were, as it were, told: Because of the disgraceful character of your actions, your sacrifice will be of a most defective condition. As the action of the *unfaithful wife* is more disgraceful than that committed by the *inadvertent transgressor*, her sacrifice was of a most defective matter, namely, *barley flour*.[51] These particulars have thus been set forth in a consistent way; they are wonderfully meaningful.

The *Sages* have already mentioned that the reason for the *offering on the eighth day of consecration being a calf, a young bullock for a sin-offering*,[52] was that it constituted an *atonement for the action of the* [*golden*] *calf*, and similarly that *the Day of Atonement's sin-offering being a young bullock for a sin-offering*[53] constituted an *atonement for the action of the* [*golden*] *calf*. In accordance with the notion that they have mentioned, it seems to me that the reason for the fact that all the *sin-offerings, both of private individuals and of the congregation, are he-goats* [*seʿirim*]—I refer to *the he-goats* [*offered on the occasion of the festivals*] *of pilgrimage, on the New-Moons, on the Day of Atonement, and* [*for the sin*] *of idolatry*—is that the reason, in my opinion, was that their greatest act of disobedience consisted at that time in sacrificing to the *seʿirim*;[54] as the text states: *And they shall no more*

46. Here the Sanhedrin is meant. 47. Cf. Lev. 4:4 and 14. 48. Cf. Num. 15:24.
49. Cf. Lev. 5:15, 18, and 25; 14:12–13; 19:21–22; Num. 6:12.
50. Cf. Lev. 1:3 and 10. 51. Cf. Num. 5:15. 52. Lev. 9:2. 53. Cf. Lev. 16:3.
54. The word denotes both "he-goats" and "devils."

offer their sacrifices to the seʿirim after whom they have gone a whoring.[55] However the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, consider that the reason for which the *congregation is* constantly *atoned for by means of seʿirim* is that the whole *congregation of Israel* committed their first act of disobedience with the help of a *kid* [*seʿir*] *of goats*. They refer | to the sale of *Joseph the righteous*, in whose story it is said: *And they killed a kid of goats, and so on.*[56] Do not regard this reason as feeble. For the end of all these actions is to establish firmly in the soul of every disobedient individual the constant need for remembering and making mention of his sin—as it is said: *And my sin is ever before me*[57]—and that he, his descendants, and the descendants of his descendants, must seek forgiveness for the sin by an act of obedience belonging to the same species as the act of disobedience. I mean by this that if the act of disobedience was in connection with property, he must expend his property in the act of obedience. If the act of disobedience consists in corporeal pleasures, he must weary and afflict his body by means of fasting and awakening at night. If the act of disobedience pertains to morals, he must practice the contrary moral habit in opposition to it, as we have explained in *Laws concerning Opinions*[58] and elsewhere. If the act of disobedience consists in a speculation—I mean by this that if he believes in an opinion that is not sound because of his incapacity and his slackness in inquiry and in devoting himself to speculation—he must counter this by suppressing his reflection and preventing it from reflecting about anything pertaining to the things of this world, but direct it exclusively to the intelligible and to an exact study of what ought to be believed. This approximates its dictum: *And my heart hath been secretly enticed, but my hand touched my mouth*;[59] this is a simile for withdrawal and abstention with regard to something obscure, as we have explained in the beginning of this Treatise. This was done, as you will see, in the case of *Aaron*; for when he went astray in *the action of the* [*golden*] *calf*, it was prescribed that he and those of his descendants who would replace him, should sacrifice a *bullock and a calf*.[60] When the act of disobedience concerned a *kid* [*seʿir*] *of goats*, the act of obedience also concerned a *kid of goats*. When these notions are consolidated in the soul, this leads without any doubt necessarily to one's taking a grave view of the act of disobedience and to an avoidance of it, so that the individual in question will not, by stumbling into it, be in need of a long and unpleasant quest for forgiveness, which sometimes may not | be

55. Lev. 17:7. 56. Gen. 37:31. 57. Ps. 51:5.
58. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, Deʿoth, II 2. 59. Job 31:27. 60. Cf. Lev. 9:2; 16:3.

achieved. Accordingly he will avoid and flee from the act of disobedience from the outset. This is of most manifest utility. Grasp also this intention.

I see fit to call your attention here to a very strange matter, though its external meaning does not pertain to the purpose of the Treatise. This concerns the fact that only the *he-goat* [*se'ir*] offered on *the New-Moon as a sin-offering* is called in [Scripture] *a sin-offering unto the Lord.*[61] None of the *he-goats* offered on any of *the* [*festivals*] *of pilgrimage* or in the other *sin-offerings* are called thus. The reason for this is, in my opinion, most manifest; namely, that the *sacrifices* offered by the *congregation* at certain periods, I refer to the *additional* [*sacrifices*], were all of them *burnt-offerings;* and a *kid of goats* was brought on each of those days as a *sin-offering* and eaten. Now the *burnt-offerings* were burnt in their entirety, and therefore they are explicitly designated as *an offering made by fire unto the Lord;*[62] whereas it is never said, *a sin-offering unto the Lord* or *a peace-offering unto the Lord*, for these were eaten. It was not even permissible that the *sin-offerings* that were burnt[63] be called *an offering made by fire unto the Lord;* the reason for this I shall explain in this chapter. Consequently one cannot therefore conceive that the *he-goats* referred to above should be called *sin-offerings unto the Lord*, for they were eaten and not burnt in their entirety. As, however, it was apprehended that the *he-goat* offered on *the New-Moon* could be imagined to be a sacrifice to the moon, such as was offered by the Copts[64] of Egypt at the beginning of the months, it was explicitly stated that this goat was consecrated to God and not to the moon. This apprehension was not felt with regard to the *he-goats* offered on *the* [*festivals*] *of pilgrimage* and on other occasions because these days were not beginnings of months and had no natural sign to distinguish them, but were instituted by the Law through an imposed convention. The beginnings of the lunar months, on the other hand, were not instituted through a convention imposed by the Law; but the religious communities used to sacrifice on those days to the moon, just as they sacrificed to the sun when it rose and when it entered | certain degrees of the ecliptic, as is universally admitted in the books in question.[65] For this reason an anomalous expression is used with regard to the *he-goat* referred to above; it is said of it that it is to be offered *unto the Lord*, so that the fancies bound up with those hearts[66] suffering from inveterate disease be put to an end. Know then this marvellous thing too.

61. Num. 28:15. 62. Num. 28:19; 29:13 and 36. 63. Cf., e.g., Lev. 4:12 and 21.
64. Or: Egyptians. *Qubt.* 65. The books of the Sabians.
66. Those of the Children of Israel.

Know that all *sin-offerings* that are believed to serve in seeking forgiveness for great sins or for one great sin, such as the *sin-offering for ignorance* and others of the same kind, are burnt in their entirety *outside the camp* and not upon the *altar*; for only the *burnt-offering* and similar things may be burnt upon the *altar*. Hence it is called *the altar of the burnt-offering*,[67] for the smell of the meat of the *burnt-offering* is *a sweet odor*, and similarly all *memorials* are *a sweet odor*. And indubitably this is so, for these sacrifices were performed with a view to putting an end to *idolatrous* opinions, as we have explained. As for the burning of these *sin-offerings*, its purpose was to signify that the trace of the sin in question was wiped out and had disappeared just as the body that had been burnt had disappeared, and that no trace remained of that action just as no trace remained of the *sin-offering*, which was destroyed by having been burnt. Consequently its burning could not offer *a sweet odor unto the Lord*,[68] but the contrary; I mean that there was detestable and abhorrent smoke. It was therefore burnt in its entirety *outside the camp*. Do you not see what is said of *the oblation of an unfaithful wife: An oblation of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance?*[69] By no means is it described as a pleasing thing.

Inasmuch as the *he-goat that was sent forth* into the wilderness served wholly to atone for great sins, so that there was no *sin-offering of the congregation* that served as atonement in as great a measure as that goat, which was as it were the bearer of all the sins, it was not to receive at all such treatment as being slaughtered or burnt or sacrificed, but had to be removed to as great a distance as possible and sent forth unto *a land that is cut off*,[70] I mean one that was separated from habitation. No one has any doubt that sins are not | bodies that may be transported from the back of one individual to that of another. But all these actions are parables serving to bring forth a form in the soul so that a passion toward repentance should result: We have freed ourselves from all our previous actions, cast them behind our backs, and removed them to an extreme distance.

As for the offering of wine, I am up to now perplexed with regard to it: How could He have commanded to offer it, since the *idolaters* offered it? No reason for this has occurred to me. Someone else gave the following reason: For the desire, which is located in the liver, the most excellent thing is meat; for the animal faculty, which is located in the heart, the most excellent thing is wine; similarly the faculty located in the brain—that is,

67. Cf. e.g., Exod. 30:28.
68. Certain portions of the sacrifices and the offerings are called thus; cf., e.g., Lev. 2:9.
69. Num. 5:15. 70. Lev. 16:22.

the psychic faculty – takes pleasure in songs accompanied by instruments. Therefore every faculty offers to God the thing most cherished by it. Accordingly offerings consist in meat, wine, and sound – I mean *song*.

The reason for the utility of pilgrimage is well known. For such a gathering results in a renewal of the Law, this being a consequence of people being affected by it and of the fraternity that comes about among them because of it. This applies especially to the *commandment to assemble* [the people], whose reason is manifest: *That they may hear, and so on.*[71] *The money for the second tithe* was meant to be spent there,[72] as we have explained;[73] also the *fourth-year fruit of planting*[74] and the *tithe of the cattle*. There were accordingly there the meat of the *tithe*, the wine of the *fourth-year fruit of planting* and the *silver for the second tithe*. Consequently there was much food there, for it was not lawful to sell a part of this or to set it aside from one period to the next. But as He, may He be exalted, has said: *Year in year, and so on;*[75] hence of necessity it had to be used in giving alms. Now giving alms in the course of festivals is insisted upon. It says: *And thou shalt rejoice in thy festival, thou and thy son | and thy daughter, and so on, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow.*[76]

We have now dealt with the single commandments belonging to this class and with many of their particulars.

CHAPTER 47

The *commandments* comprised in the twelfth class are those that we have enumerated in the *Book of Cleanness*. Even though we have already summarily mentioned their utility, we shall give additional explanations and we shall set forth the reasons for this class of commandments, as is proper. After that I will give the reasons for the various particular commandments – those of them whose reasons have become clear to me. I shall then say that this Law of God, which was prescribed to *Moses our Master*, to whom in consequence it is ascribed, came to facilitate the actions of worship and to lighten the burden. All the things in it that you may perhaps imagine to involve unpleasantness or a heavy burden appear so to you only because you do not know the usages and teachings that existed in those days.

71. Deut. 31:12. 72. Cf. Deut. 14:25–26. 73. Cf. III 39. 74. Cf. III 37.
75. Deut. 14:22. The quotation is not exact. 76. Deut. 16:14.

It behooves you to compare a rite in which for reasons of divine worship a man burns his child with one in which he burns a young pigeon. The *Torah* states literally: *For even their sons and their daughters do they burn in the fire to their gods.*[1] This was the worship they rendered to their gods. What corresponds to this in our worship is the burning of a young pigeon or even of a handful of flour. In view of this our religious community[2] was rebuked when in a state of apostasy, and was told: *O My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against Me.*[3] It is also said concerning this subject: *Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? or a land of thick darkness? Wherefore say My people, we roam at large, and so on;*[4] he means, what unpleasant burden was imposed upon them by | this Law so that they turned away from it? He, may He be exalted, also addresses us, saying: *What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and so on.*[5] All these texts have one purpose.

This is a premise of great importance that must not be lost from your mind. After having stated it, I shall say: We have already explained that the whole intention with regard to *the Sanctuary* was to affect those that came to it with a feeling of awe and of fear; as it says: *Ye shall fear My Sanctuary.*[6] Now if one is continually in contact with a venerable object, the impression received from it in the soul diminishes and the feeling it provokes becomes slight. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* have already drawn attention to this notion, saying that it is not desirable that the *Sanctuary* should be entered at every moment, and in support quoted its dictum: *Let thy foot be seldom in thy neighbor's house, lest he be sated with thee, and hate thee.*[7] This being the intention, He, may He be exalted, forbade the *unclean* to enter the *Sanctuary* in spite of there being many species of *uncleanness,* so that one could — but for a few exceptions — scarcely find a clean individual. For even if one were preserved from touching a *carcass* of a beast, one might not be preserved from touching one of the *eight creeping animals,*[8] which often fall into dwellings and into food and drink and upon which a man often stumbles in walking. And if one were preserved from that, one might not be preserved from contact with a *menstruating woman* or *a woman or a man having a running issue* or a *leper* or *their bed.*[9] And if one were preserved from that, one might not be preserved from *sexual intercourse with one's wife* or from *nocturnal pollution.*[10] And even if one were cleansed from these kinds of *uncleanness,* one would

1. Deut. 12:31. 2. Or: nation. 3. Mic. 6:3. 4. Jer. 2:31.
5. Jer. 2:5. 6. Lev. 19:30. 7. Prov. 25:17. 8. Cf. Lev. 11:29–30.
9. Cf. Lev. 15; 13:45–46. 10. Cf. Lev. 15:16–18; Deut. 23:11–12.

not be allowed to enter the *Sanctuary* till *after sunset*.[11] Nor was one allowed to enter the *Sanctuary* at night, as is made clear in *Middoth* and *Tamid*;[12] and on that night in most cases the man in question would have intercourse with his wife or one of the other courses of *uncleanness* would befall him, and he would find himself on the following day in the same position as on the day before. Thus all of this was | a reason for keeping away from the *Sanctuary* and for not entering it at every moment. You know already what [the Sages] literally say: *Even a clean man may not enter the Hall for the purpose of performing divine service before having immersed himself* [*in water*].[13] In consequence of such actions, *fear* will continue and an impression leading to the humility that was aimed at will be produced. To the extent that a certain kind of *uncleanness* was more frequent, purification from it was more difficult and was achieved at a later moment. Being under the same roof as dead bodies, more especially those of relatives and neighbors, is more frequent than any other kind of *uncleanness*. Accordingly one is purified from it only by means of the *ashes of a* [*red*] *heifer*, though these are very rare, and after seven days.[14] *Running issue* and *menstruation* are more frequent than contact with an *unclean individual*; hence these require *seven days* for purification,[15] and whoever approached someone who was unclean requires one day.[16] The purification of *a man or a woman having running issue* and of a *woman after childbirth* was only completed by means of a *sacrifice*, for such cases are rarer than *menstruation*. Also, all these things are disgusting—I mean *a menstruating woman*, *a man or a woman having running issue*, *a leper*, *a corpse*, *a carcass* of a beast, *a creeping animal*, and *issue of semen*. Accordingly many purposes are achieved by means of these laws. One of them is to keep men away from disgusting things. The second is to safeguard the *Sanctuary*. The third is to protect what is generally accepted and customary, for, as you will hear presently, unpleasant things were imposed on the Sabians in cases of uncleanness. The fourth is to ease unpleasant restrictions and to order things in such a manner that questions of *uncleanness* and *cleanness* should not prevent a man from engaging in any of his occupations; for this matter of *uncleanness* and *cleanness* concerns only *the Holy Place* and *holy things*, nothing else: *She shall touch no holy thing, nor come into the Sanctuary*.[17] As for the rest, there is no sin if one remains *unclean* as long as one wishes and eats, as one wishes, *ordinary* food that has become *unclean*. It is generally

11. Cf., e.g., Lev. 22:6–7. 12. Tractates of the Mishnah.
13. Mishnah, Yoma, III 3. 14. Cf. Num. 19. 15. Cf. Lev. 15:13, 19, and 28.
16. Cf. Lev. 15:5–11, 21–23, and 27. 17. Lev. 12:4.

known that according to the usages observed up to | our times by the Sabians in the lands of the East, I refer to the remnants of the Magians,[18] the *menstruating woman* remains isolated in her house; the places upon which she treads are burnt; whoever speaks with her becomes unclean; and if a wind that blows passes over a menstruating woman and a clean individual, the latter becomes unclean. See how great the difference is between this and our dictum: *All the various kinds of work that a wife does for her husband, are also done by a menstruating woman for her husband, except for washing his face, and so on.*[19] It is only forbidden to have intercourse with her in the days in which she is unclean and defiled. Another generally known usage of the Sabians that continues to our time is to regard as unclean everything that is separated from the body—that is, hair or nails or blood. Therefore every barber is unclean, in their opinion, because he touches blood and hair; and everyone who shaves must immerse in running water. They have many burdensome usages of this kind, whereas as for us we only claim that something is *unclean* or *clean* with regard to *holy things* and to the *Sanctuary*.

As for His dictum, may He be exalted, *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy, for I am holy*,[20] it does not apply at all to *uncleanness* and *cleanness*. *Siphra* states literally: *This concerns sanctification by the commandments;* they also say of His dictum, *Ye shall be holy*,[21] that *this concerns sanctification by the commandments*. For this reason, transgression of the *commandments* is also called *uncleanness*. This expression is used with regard to the mothers and roots of the *commandments*, namely, [the commandments concerning] *idolatry*, *incest*, and *shedding of blood*. With regard to *idolatry* it says: *Because he hath given of his seed unto Molech to render unclean My Sanctuary*.[22] And with regard to *incest* it says: *Do not make yourself unclean with all these things, and so on.*[23] And with regard to *shedding of blood* it says: *You shall not make unclean the land, and so on.*[24] It therefore has become clear that the term *uncleanness* is used equivocally in three different senses: It is used of disobedience and of transgression of commandments concerning action or opinion; it is used of dirt and filth, | *Her uncleanness is in her skirts*;[25] and it is used according to these fancied notions, I refer to touching or carrying certain things or to being under the same roof with certain things. With reference to this last sense, we say: *The words of the Torah are not subject to becoming unclean*.[26] Similarly the

18. I.e., the Zoroastrians. 19. B.T., Kethuboth, 4b and 61a.
20. Lev. 11:44. The Siphra is to this verse. 21. Lev. 19:2. The Siphra is to this verse.
22. Lev. 20:3. 23. Lev. 18:24.
24. Num. 35:34. Maimonides' quotation is not exact. 25. Lam. 1:9.
26. Cf. B.T., Berakhoth, 22a.

term *holiness* is used equivocally in three senses opposed to those three senses.

In view of the fact that purification from the *uncleanness* caused by a *corpse* could only be achieved after seven days and also after *the ashes of a [red] heifer* have been found, and since the *Priests* were always in need of entering the *Sanctuary* for the purpose of sacrificing, every *Priest* in particular was forbidden to expose himself to being made *unclean by a corpse* unless it were a case of strong necessity in which it would be difficult for nature to avoid this; I refer to avoiding contact with one's parents, children, and brothers.[27] And as there was great need that the *High Priest* should be constantly *in the Sanctuary* – according to its dictum: *And it*[28] *shall always be upon his forehead*[29] – he was absolutely forbidden to expose himself to the *uncleanness of a corpse*, even of those of relatives. Do you not see that this prohibition does not extend to women? It is said: *The sons of Aaron*,[30] *and not: the daughters of Aaron*, women not being needed in sacrifice.

As it cannot be avoided that sometimes an individual may be negligent and may enter the *Sanctuary* while he is *unclean* or eat *holy things* while he is *unclean*, or else he may even do it *deliberately* – for the majority of *wicked people* commit grave acts of disobedience *deliberately* – *sacrifices* were commanded that would *atone for the uncleanness of the Sanctuary and its holy things*. These sacrifices were of various kinds, some of them intended to atone for *deliberate transgressions* and others for those committed *inadvertently*. These are *the he-goats of [the festivals of] pilgrimage, the he-goats of the New-Moons, and the he-goat that was sent forth*,[31] as has been explained in its place. These things were commanded so that the *deliberate transgressor* should not think that he has not committed a great sin in *rendering the Sanctuary of the Lord unclean*; but on the other hand he will know that his sin *has been atoned for by means of the he-goat*. For it says: *That they die not in their uncleanness*,[32] and it also says: | *And Aaron shall bear the iniquity committed in the holy things, and so on*.[33] This notion is often repeated.

As for the *uncleanness of leprosy*, we have already explained its meaning. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, have also explained it. They have made known to us that the established principle in regard to it is that it is a punishment for *slander*[34] and that at first this change appears in the walls.[35] If the man repents, the purpose has been achieved. If,

27. Cf. Lev. 21:2. 28. I.e., a plate of pure gold. 29. Exod. 28:38.
30. Cf. Lev. 21:1. 31. Cf. Lev. 16:16. Cf. III 46. 32. Lev. 15:31.
33. Exod. 28:38. 34. Cf., e.g., B.T., ʿArakhin, 16b. 35. Cf. Lev. 14:34–48.

however, he continues in his disobedience, the change extends to his bed and his house furniture. If he still persists in his disobedience, it passes over to his clothing, then to his body. This is a miracle that was perpetuated in the religious community like that of the *waters of the woman suspected of adultery*.[36] The utility of this belief is manifest, there being also the fact that leprosy is contagious and that, almost by nature, all men find it disgusting. The reason why purification from it was effected by means of *cedar wood, hyssop, scarlet thread, and two birds*,[37] is given in the *Midrashim*;[38] but it does not fit in with our purpose, and up to now I do not know the reason for any of these things; nor why *cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet thread* were used in the ceremony of the *red heifer* nor why *a bunch of hyssop* was used for the sprinkling of the blood of the *paschal lamb*. I cannot find any reason whereby I could account for these species having been singled out.

The reason why the *red heifer* is called a *sin-offering* is that through it the purification of the individual *rendered unclean by a corpse* is made perfect so that afterwards he may enter the *Sanctuary*. The meaning of this is that in the cases in which individuals were defiled by a *corpse*, they would have been forbidden *ever* to enter the *Sanctuary* and to eat *holy things* unless there had been this *heifer*, which carried away this *sin*. This is similar to the *plate* [worn by the High Priest on his forehead], which *brings expiation for uncleanness*, and similar to *the goats that are burnt*.[39] For this reason *one who engaged in [the sacrifice of] the [red] heifer and in [that of] the goats that are burnt, rendered the garments unclean*.[40] Similarly one who approached *the he-goat | that was sent forth* became unclean[41] — according to what is believed — because of the great sins that it carried away.

We have thus given the reasons, as they appear to us, for those commandments included in this class whose reasons we know.

36. Cf. Num. 5:11–31. 37. Cf. Lev. 14:4 and 51.
38. In the text: *Midrashoth*. Cf. Leviticus Rabbah, XVI.
39. Cf. Lev. 16:27; Num. 15:24.
40. Mishnah, Zebaḥim, XII 5. Cf. Num. 19: 8, 10, 21, and 22; Lev. 16:28.
41. Cf. Lev. 16:26.

CHAPTER 48

The *commandments* comprised in the thirteenth class are those that we have enumerated in *Laws concerning Forbidden Foods*, in *Laws concerning Slaughtering* and in *Laws concerning Vows and Nazaritism*. We have already given, in this Treatise[1] and in the Commentary on *Aboth*,[2] an exhaustive and eloquent exposition of the utility of this class. We shall add to the clarity of this explanation by examining closely the single *commandments* included therein.

I say, then, that to eat any of the various kinds of food that the Law has forbidden us is blameworthy. Among all those forbidden to us, only pork and fat may be imagined not to be harmful. But this is not so, for pork is more humid than is proper and contains much superfluous matter. The major reason why the Law abhors it is its being very dirty and feeding on dirty things. You know to what extent the Law insists upon the need to remove filth out of sight, even in the field and in a military camp,[3] and all the more within cities. Now if swine were used for food, market places and even houses would have been dirtier than *latrines*, as may be seen at present in the country of the Franks.[4] You know the dictum of [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed: The mouth of a swine is like walking excrement.*[5]

The fat of the intestines, too, makes us full, spoils the digestion, and produces cold and thick blood. | It is more suitable to burn it. Blood, on the one hand, and carcasses of beasts that have died, on the other, are also difficult to digest and constitute a harmful[6] nourishment. It is well known that a beast that is *terephah*[7] *is close to being a carcass.*

With reference to the signs marking a permitted animal—that is, chewing the cud and divided hoofs in the case of beasts, and fins and scales in the case of fish[8]—know that their existence is not in itself a reason for animals being permitted nor their absence a reason for animals being prohibited; they are merely signs by means of which the praised species may be discerned from the blamed species.

The reason why *the sinew of the thigh vein* is prohibited, is given in the [scriptural] text.[9]

The reason for the prohibition against eating *a limb [cut off] a living*

1. Cf. III 35. 2. A tractate of the Mishnah. 3. Cf. Deut. 23:13–15. Cf. III 41.
4. I.e., of the western Europeans. 5. B.T., Berakhoth, 25a. 6. Literally: bad.
7. I.e., an animal that is diseased or wounded.
8. Cf. Lev. 11:3, 9, and 10; Deut. 14:6 and 9. 9. Cf. Gen. 32:33.

animal[10] is because this would make one acquire the habit of cruelty. Such things were done in those times by the kings of the *Gentiles*; this was also an action used in *idolatry* – I mean to cut off a certain limb from a beast and to eat it.

As for the prohibition against eating *meat [boiled] in milk*,[11] it is in my opinion not improbable that – in addition to this being undoubtedly very gross food and very filling – *idolatry* had something to do with it. Perhaps such food was eaten at one of the ceremonies of their cult or at one of their festivals. A confirmation of this may, in my opinion, be found in the fact that the prohibition against eating *meat [boiled] in milk*, when it is mentioned for the first two times,[12] occurs near the commandment concerning pilgrimage: *Three times in the year, and so on.*[13] It is as if it said: When you go on pilgrimage and enter *the house of the Lord your God*, do not cook there in the way they used to do. According to me this is the most probable[14] view regarding the reason for this prohibition; but I have not seen this set down in any of the books of the Sabians that I have read.

The commandment concerning the slaughtering of animals is necessary. For the natural food of man consists only of the plants deriving from the seeds growing in the earth and of the flesh of animals, the most excellent kinds of meat being those that are | permitted to us. No physician is ignorant of this. Now since the necessity to have good food requires that animals be killed, the aim was to kill them in the easiest manner, and it was forbidden to torment them through killing them in a reprehensible manner by piercing the lower part of their throat or by cutting off one of their members, just as we have explained.

It is likewise forbidden to slaughter *it and its young on the same day*,[15] this being a precautionary measure in order to avoid slaughtering the young animal in front of its mother. For in these cases animals feel very great pain, there being no difference regarding this pain between man and the other animals. For the love and the tenderness of a mother for her child is not consequent upon reason, but upon the activity of the imaginative faculty, which is found in most animals just as it is found in man. This law applies in particular to *ox* and *lamb*, because these are the domestic animals that we are allowed to eat and that in most cases it is usual to eat; in their case the mother can be differentiated from her young.

10. Cf. Gen. 9:4; Deut. 12:23; B.T., Sanhedrin, 57a; B.T., Hullin, 101b.
11. Cf. Exod. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 14:21. Cf. Onqelos' translation of these passages.
12. Cf. Exod. 23:19; 34:26. 13. Exod. 23:17; 34:23.
14. Literally: the strongest. 15. Cf. Lev. 22:28.

This is also the reason for the commandment *to let [the mother] go from the nest.*[16] For in general the eggs over which the bird has sat and the young that need their mother are not fit to be eaten. If then the mother is let go and escapes of her own accord, she will not be pained by seeing that the young are taken away. In most cases this will lead to people leaving everything alone, for what may be taken is in most cases not fit to be eaten. If the Law takes into consideration these pains of the soul in the case of beast and birds, what will be the case with regard to the individuals of the human species as a whole? You must not allege as an objection against me the dictum of [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed:*[17] *He who says: Thy mercy extendeth to young birds, and so on.*[18] For this is one of the two opinions mentioned by us[19]—I mean the opinion of those who think that there is no reason for the Law except only the will [of God]—but as for us, | we follow only the second opinion.

We have already drawn attention to the fact that the *Torah* itself set for the reason for *the covering of blood* and that this commandment applies in particular to *clean wild beasts and clean birds.*[20]

Besides the ordinances given to us concerning the prohibition of forbidden food, ordinances have also been prescribed to us with regard to the *vows* by which we impose *prohibitions* on ourselves.[21] Whenever a man says: This bread or this meat is forbidden to me, it is forbidden to him to eat it—all this being training with a view to achieving temperance and to restraining the appetite for eating and drinking. They say: *Vows are a fence for abstinence.*[22] As women are prone to anger, being easily affected and having weak souls, there would have been grave troubles, quarrels, and disorder in the house, if their oaths had been under their control. For a certain kind of food would have been permitted for the husband and forbidden for the wife and another kind would have been forbidden for the daughter and permitted for the mother. Therefore the matter, with everything pertaining to it, is given into the charge of the master of the house. Do you not see that a woman who is governed by herself and not dependent upon the control of the master of the house, has with regard to *vows* the same status as men?—I refer to a woman who has no husband and no father or has arrived at the age of puberty, I mean one that is *of age.*[23]

The reason for *nazaritism* is most manifest; it consists in bringing about abstinence from drinking wine, which has caused the ruin of the

16. Cf. Deut. 22:6–7. 17. Mishnah, Berakhoth, V 3.
18. Such an individual is blamed in the Mishnah. 19. Cf. III 26 and 31.
20. Cf. III 46. 21. Cf. Num. 30:3–17. 22. Mishnah, Aboth, III 13.
23. According to B.T., Nedarim, 70a–b, the age referred to is twelve years and six months.

ancients and the moderns: *Many, yea, a mighty host have been slain by it;*[24] *But these also have erred through wine, and so on.*[25] The prohibition you see against eating *anything that cometh of the grape vine*[26] results from the law regarding *nazaritism*, being an additional measure made with a view to the avoidance of wine, so that people should content themselves with no more of it than is necessary. For whoever avoids it is called *holy* and is put in the same rank as a *High Priest* as far as *holiness* is concerned, | so that, like the latter, he may not render himself *unclean* through contact with a corpse, even that of *his father or his mother.*[27] All this high esteem is given to him because he abstains from drink.

CHAPTER 49

The *commandments* included in the fourteenth class are those that we have enumerated in the *Book of Women* and in *Laws on Prohibited Sexual Relations. The interbreeding of beasts*[1] and *the commandment of circumcision* also belong to this class. The purpose of this class of commandments has already been reported.[2] Now I shall begin to explain the particulars.

I say then: It is well known that friends are something that is necessary for man throughout his whole life. Aristotle has already set this forth in the ninth book of the "Ethics."[3] For in a state of health and happiness, a man takes pleasure in their familiar relationship with him; in adversity he has recourse to them; and in his old age, when his body is grown weak, he seeks their help. The same things may be found to a much greater extent in the relationship with one's children and also in the relationship with one's relatives. For fraternal sentiments and mutual love and mutual help can be found in their perfect form only among those who are related by their ancestry. Accordingly a single tribe that is united through a common ancestor — even if he is remote — because of this, love one another, help one

24. Cf. Prov. 7:26. 25. Isa. 28:7. 26. Judg. 13:14. Cf. Num. 6:4.
27. Cf. Num. 6:7.

1. No part of the *Mishneh Torah* is called "Interbreeding of Beasts." The subject is treated by Maimonides in the "Book of Seeds" (*Zeraʿim*), "Laws concerning Interbreeding" (*Kilʾaim*).
2. Cf. III 35.
3. In fact, the passage occurs in Book VIII (1155a3 ff.) of the *Nicomachean Ethics.*

another, and have pity on one another; and the attainment of these things is the greatest purpose of the Law. Hence *harlots* are prohibited,[4] because through them lines of ancestry are destroyed. For a child born of them is a stranger to the people; no one knows to what family group he belongs, and no one in his family group knows him; and this is the worst of conditions for him and for his father. Another important consideration comes in as a reason | for the prohibition of *harlots*. This is the prevention of an intense lust for sexual intercourse and for constant preoccupation with it. For lust is increased through the change of the individuals that are *harlots*, for man is not stirred in the same way by an individual to whom he has been continuously accustomed as by individuals who are constantly renewed and who differ in shapes and manners. In the prohibition of *harlots* there is a very great utility – namely, the prevention of evils; for if *harlots* were permitted, a number of men might happen to betake themselves at one and the same time to one woman; they would inevitably quarrel and in most cases they would kill one another or kill the woman, this being – as is well known – a thing that constantly happens: *And they assemble themselves in troops at a prostitute's house.*[5] In order to prevent these great evils and to bring about this common utility – namely, knowledge of the lines of ancestry – *harlots* and *male prostitutes* are prohibited and there is no way to engage in permitted sexual intercourse other than through singling out a woman for oneself and marrying her in public. For if it sufficed merely to single her out, most men would bring a *harlot* to their house for a certain time, having made an agreement with her about this, and say that she is a wife. Therefore a binding ceremony and a certain act have been prescribed signifying that the woman is allotted to the man; this is the *betrothal*. Then when the act is made in public, it is the ceremony of *marriage: And Boaz took ten men, and so on.*[6] Sometimes the union of the two may be discordant and matters in their household not in good order. Consequently divorce is permitted. However, if a divorce could become valid merely by means of the utterance of words or through the man's turning the woman out of his house, the woman might watch for some negligence on the part of her husband and then go out and claim to be divorced. Or if some individual had fornicated with her, she and the adulterer might claim that she had been divorced beforehand. Therefore the Law has given to us the ordinance that a divorce can only be made valid by means of a writ attesting it: *And he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and so on.*[7]

As accusations[8] of adultery | and imaginings concerned with it are very

4. Cf. Deut. 23:18. 5. Jer. 5:7. 6. Ruth 4:2. 7. Deut. 24:1. 8. Or: suspicions.

frequent with regard to women, the Law has given us ordinances concerning the *woman who is suspected of adultery*.[9] These ordinances oblige every married woman to take extreme care in her behavior and to have recourse to the greatest precautions, lest the heart of her husband be incensed on her account. For she anticipates with apprehension the horror of the *waters of the woman suspected of adultery*. If she is pure and has safeguarded herself, most men would give everything they possess in order to be liberated from having to make her undergo this procedure; they would even prefer death to this great shame, which consists in uncovering the woman's head, undoing her hair, tearing her garments so that the heart is exposed, and making her go round throughout the whole *Sanctuary* in the presence of the public, both men and women, and in the presence of the *Great Court of Law*.[10] Through these apprehensions, grave evils have been cut short that would have destroyed the order of a certain number of households.

As every *girl* who is a *virgin* is set for marriage with the first man that happens along, her seducer is only obliged to marry her; for he is the one who is most suitable for her, and this indubitably makes better repair for the flaw in her than her marrying another man. If, however, she or her father does not wish this, the seducer must pay a dowry.[11] There is additional punishment for a *man who has raped* a girl: *He may not put her away all his days*.[12]

As for the reason for the *levirate*, it is literally stated [in Scripture] that this was an ancient custom that obtained before the *giving of the Torah*[13] and that was perpetuated by the Law.[14] As for the ceremony of *taking off the shoe*,[15] the reason for it is to be found in the fact that the actions of which it is composed were considered shameful, according to the customs of those times, and that on account of this the brother-in-law might perhaps wish to avoid this shame and consequently to *marry his brother's widow*. This is made manifest in the text of the *Torah: So shall it be done unto the man, and so on. And his name shall be called in Israel, and so on*.[16]

From the story of *Judah*[17] a noble moral habit and equity in conduct may be learnt; this appears from [Judah's] words: *Let her take it, lest we be put to shame; behold, I sent | this kid*.[18] The interpretation of this is as follows: Before the *giving of the Torah* sexual intercourse with a *harlot* was regarded in the same way as sexual intercourse with one's wife is regarded

9. Cf. Num. 5:11–31. Cf. III 47. 10. Cf. Num. 5:18. 11. Cf. Exod. 22:16.
12. Deut. 22:29. 13. Cf. Gen. 38:8. 14. Cf. Deut. 25:5–6.
15. Cf. Deut. 25:7–10. 16. Deut. 25:9–10.
17. The story of Judah and Tamar; cf. Gen. 38. 18. Gen. 38:23.

after the *giving of the Torah*. I mean to say that it was a permitted act that did not by any means arouse repugnance. The payment of the hire that was agreed upon to a *harlot* was in that time something similar to the payment now of a *wife's dowry* when she is divorced, I mean that it was one of the rights of the woman with regard to which the man had to discharge his obligation. Accordingly *Judah's* saying, *Lest we be put to shame*, teaches us that to speak of any matters pertaining to sexual intercourse – even of those that are permitted – is shameful for us and that it is proper to be silent about them and to conceal them, even if this should lead to loss of money. This is just as you see *Judah* doing, in saying: It is better that we should suffer a loss and that she should keep what she has taken than that we should give publicity to our search and bring shame upon us. This is the excellent moral habit that we learn from this story. As for the precept of justice by which we profit, it is to be found in the word in which he answers that he is innocent of all violence with regard to the woman, that he does not go back on his word, and that he does not diminish the price agreed upon with her: *Behold, I sent this kid, and so on.* That kid was indubitably one that among those of its species was possessed of the highest excellence; therefore in referring to it he employs [the demonstrative pronoun] *this*. This is the justice that they had taken over from *Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham:* namely, that one must not make changes in one's given word or break one's promise; that all obligations must be discharged fully and integrally; that there is no difference between what has been given to one as a loan or a deposit and what you owe him in any way whatever as wages or something else. The dowry of all wives has the same status as the wages of all hired men, and there is no difference between *one who withholds the wages of a hired man* and one who does this to his wife. Again there is no difference between one who persecutes a hired man and devises ruses in order to send him away without | paying his wages and one who does the same thing to his wife with a view to sending her away without paying her dowry. Do you not behold how great is the justice of these *righteous statutes and judgments*,[19] as shown in what is ordained with regard to a man who *gives* [*his wife*] *a bad reputation*.[20] There is no doubt that a wicked man of this kind did not find his wife, *to whom he gave a bad reputation*, to his taste and thought her ugly. If he had wished to divorce her in the way this is done by everyone who divorces his wife, there would have been no impediment. But if he had divorced her, he would have been obliged to give her what was due to her. Accordingly he laid *wanton charges*[21] against her, in order to get rid

19. Deut. 4:8. 20. Cf. Deut. 22:13–19. 21. Cf. Deut. 22:14.

of her without payment, and slandered her and defamed her by accusing her of things that it was impossible for her to have committed, in order to withhold from her the sum that she had the right to demand from him, namely, *fifty shekels of silver*—this being *the dowry for virgins* fixed in the *Torah*. He, may He be exalted, has commanded that he pay *a hundred shekels of silver*, this being based upon the principle that *whom the judges shall condemn he shall pay double unto his neighbor*[22] and conforming to the *law concerning false witnesses*, as we have already explained.[23] For in a similar way he who *gave* [*his wife*] *a bad reputation* wanted to make her lose the fifty shekels that she had the right to receive from him and instead is forced to pay one hundred. This is the punishment for his having wanted to withhold the sum that he had the obligation to pay and for his having desired to appropriate it. The punishment for his having sullied her honor by accusing her of adultery is to have his own honor sullied through being flogged with a whip: *And they shall chastise him.*[24] His punishment for his preferring his concupiscence and his seeking nothing but pleasure is to have her tied to him forever: *He may not put her away all his days.*[25] For the cause that brought everything about was his thinking her ugly. In this way bad moral habits are cured, when the divine command is the physician. You will never cease discovering the clear and evident manifestation of justice in all the commandments of this Law, if you consider them carefully. Consider how the sentence of a man who *gives* [*his wife*] *a* | *bad reputation*, wishing to withhold the sum that he had the obligation to pay, is made to be equal to that of the *thief* who has taken property belonging to someone else; and how the sentence of a *false witness* who wished to do harm is made like the sentence, even if he did not succeed, of those who actually did harm and injury—I refer to the *thief* and the man who *gives* [*his wife*] *a bad reputation*. The sentence to be passed on all three is determined by *one Law and one judgment*.[26] Marvel exceedingly at the wisdom of His commandments, may He be exalted, just as you should marvel at the wisdom manifested in the things He had made. It says: *The Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment*.[27] It says that just as the things made by Him are consummately perfect, so are His commandments consummately just. However, our intellects are incapable of apprehending the perfection of everything that He has made and the justice of everything He has commanded. We only apprehend the justice of some of His commandments just as we only apprehend some of the marvels in the things He has

22. Exod. 22:8. 23. Cf. III 41. 24. Deut. 22:18. 25. Deut. 22:19.
26. Num. 15:16. 27. Deut. 32:4.

made, in the parts of the body of animals and in the motions of the spheres. What is hidden from us in both these classes[28] of things is much more considerable than what is manifest. Now we shall return to the subject of the chapter.

As for the prohibitions against *illicit unions*,[29] all of them are directed to making sexual intercourse rarer and to instilling disgust for it so that it should be sought only very seldom. The reason for the prohibition against *homosexuality* and against intercourse with *beasts* is very clear. For if the thing that is natural should be abhorred except for necessity, all the more should deviations from the natural way and the quest for pleasure alone be eschewed. All *illicit unions* with females have one thing in common: namely, that in the majority of cases these females are constantly in the company of the male[30] in his house and that they are easy of access for him and can be easily controlled by him – there being no difficulty in making them come into his presence; and no judge could blame the male | for their being with him. Consequently if the status of the women with whom *union* is *illicit* were that of any *unmarried woman*, I mean to say that if it were possible to marry them and that the prohibition with regard to them were only due to their not being the man's wives, most people would have constantly succumbed and fornicated with them. However, as it is absolutely forbidden to have intercourse with them, the strongest deterrents making us avoid this – I mean by this a sentence of *death by order of a court of law* and the threat of *being cut off*[31] – so that there is no way to have intercourse with these women, men are safe from seeking to approach them and their thoughts are turned away from them.

It is very clear that relations are easy with all women included in the prohibitions concerning *illicit unions*. For it is very general that if a man has a wife, her mother, her grandmother, her daughter, her granddaughter, and her sister will be in his house most of the time, so that the husband will constantly meet them whenever he enters, goes out, and is engaged upon his business. A wife also is often in contact with her husband's brother, his father, and his son. It is likewise manifest that in most cases a man is often in the company of his sisters, maternal and paternal aunts, and the wife of his paternal uncle, and is brought up together with them. Now these are the women with whom *union* is *illicit* because of their being *relatives*. Consider this, this being one of the reasons why intercourse with *relatives* is prohibited.

28. Literally: species. 29. Literally: nudities. 30. Literally: of the individual.
31. Cf. III 41.

The second reason derives, in my opinion, from the wish to respect the sentiment of shame. For it would be a most shameless thing if this act could take place between the root and the branch, I refer to sexual intercourse[32] with the mother or the daughter. On the ground of the root and the branch, sexual intercourse of one of the two with the other has been forbidden. There is no difference between a root having intercourse with a branch or a branch with a root; or the root and the branch joining in having intercourse with a third individual, I mean that one individual reveals his nakedness in intercourse both with a root and a branch. Therefore it is forbidden to take together | a woman and her mother and to have intercourse with the wife of one's father and the wife of one's son, for all this is revealing one's nakedness before the nakedness of both a root and a branch. Being brother or sister is like being root and branch. But once the sister was forbidden, also the sister of the wife and the wife of the brother are forbidden. For this would constitute the joining of two individuals who are like root and branch in sexual intercourse with a third individual.

As union between a brother and a sister is strictly forbidden and as they are to have the same relation as a root and a branch or even are considered to be one and the same individual, sexual intercourse with one's maternal aunt is also forbidden, for she has the same status as one's mother, and also intercourse with one's paternal aunt, as she has the same status as one's father. And just as the daughter of one's paternal uncle and the daughter of one's paternal aunt are not forbidden, the daughter of one's brother and the daughter of one's sister are likewise not forbidden because of the analogy. The fact that the wife of a brother's son is permitted to the paternal uncle, whereas the wife of the paternal uncle is forbidden to the son of a brother, may be explained by the first reason. For a brother's son is in most cases to be found in his paternal uncle's house and approaches his paternal uncle's wife just as he approaches his brother's wife; whereas a paternal uncle is not to be found in this way in the house of his brother's son and does not approach the latter's wife. Do you not see that in view of the fact that a father has the same opportunity to approach a wife of his son as the son has to approach a wife of his father, the prohibition is equally strict in both cases, its transgression being punished by *one capital punishment*.

The reason for the prohibition against having sexual intercourse with a *menstruating woman* and with a *married woman* is too clear to be in need

32. Or: marriage. In the following passage likewise, the word translated as "sexual intercourse" may also mean "marriage."

of a search for a reason. You know that we are forbidden to take pleasure in any way *in a woman who is prohibited to us*,[33] even to look at such a woman with a view to pleasure, as we have explained in *Laws concerning Prohibited Sexual Relations*.[34] We have explained there[35] that in our Law it is not permitted in any way to let our thought range freely with regard to the subject of sexual union or in any way whatever to provoke sexual excitement. If a man becomes sexually excited without having intended it, he is obliged to | direct his mind to some other thought and to reflect on something else until this sexual excitement passes away. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, say in their precepts, which perfect the virtuous:[36] *My son, if this abominable one affects you, drag him to the house of study. If he is of iron, he will melt. If he is of stone, he will break into pieces. For it is said: Is not my word like as fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*[37] [The Sage] says to his son with a view to giving him a rule of conduct: If you feel sexual excitement and suffer because of it, go *to the house of study*, read, take part in discussions, put questions, and be asked in your turn, for then this suffering will indubitably pass away. Marvel at his expression, *this abominable one*, and what an *abomination* this is! This precept is not only valid from the point of view of the Law, for the philosophers consider this matter in the same way. I have already made known to you[38] the text of Aristotle's saying that this sense is a disgrace to us, he means the sense of touch, which leads us to give preference to eating and sexual intercourse. In his writings he designates the people who give preference to sexual intercourse and to eating all kinds of dishes as abject, and expresses at length his blame of them and his mockery of them. You will find this in his book on Ethics and in his book on Rhetoric.[39] With a view to this excellent moral habit, which one ought to have the firm purpose to seek and to acquire, the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, have forbidden the contemplation of *beasts and birds when they copulate*.[40] In my opinion this is also the reason why *the interbreeding of beasts* is prohibited. For it is well known that in most cases an individual of one species is not moved to copulate with an individual of another species unless it be brought to it by hand, as is constantly done, as you may see, by those loose men who are engaged in bringing about the procreation of mules. The Law did not wish that an individual of *Israel* should be so low as to engage in this

33. Literally: *in a nakedness*. 34. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, Issurei Bi'ah, XXI 1–2.
35. Cf. Issurei Bi'ah, XXI 19. 36. B.T., Qiddushin, 30b. 37. Jer. 23:29.
38. Cf. II 36, 40, III 8.
39. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* iii.10.1118b2 ff.; *Rhetoric* i.11.1370a18 ff.
40. B.T., Abodah Zarah, 20b.

activity because of its abjectness and shamelessness and because he would thereby be engaged | in things the very mention of which — and, all the more, contact with which — is repugnant to the Law unless there be necessity. Such interbreeding, however, is not necessary. It also seems to me that the reason for the prohibition against bringing together two species for any kind of work may also be found in the wish to render more difficult the interbreeding of two species. I mean to say that its dictum, *Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together*,[41] is due to the possibility that if the two are brought together they might sometimes copulate. A proof for this may be found in the fact that this commandment is general and applies not only to *oxen* and *asses: It is indifferent whether they are an ox and an ass or any other two species. But Scripture speaks about what is usual.*[42]

Similarly with regard to *circumcision*, one of the reasons for it is, in my opinion, the wish to bring about a decrease in sexual intercourse and a weakening of the organ in question, so that this activity be diminished and the organ be in as quiet a state as possible. It has been thought that circumcision perfects what is defective congenitally. This gave the possibility to everyone to raise an objection and to say: How can natural things be defective so that they need to be perfected from outside, all the more because we know how useful the foreskin is for that member? In fact this *commandment* has not been prescribed with a view to perfecting what is defective congenitally, but to perfecting what is defective morally. The bodily pain caused to that member is the real purpose of circumcision. None of the activities necessary for the preservation of the individual is harmed thereby, nor is procreation rendered impossible, but violent concupiscence and lust that goes beyond what is needed are diminished. The fact that circumcision weakens the faculty of sexual excitement and sometimes perhaps diminishes the pleasure is indubitable. For if at birth this member has been made to bleed and has had its covering taken away from it, it must indubitably be weakened. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, have explicitly stated: *It is hard for a woman with whom an uncircumcised man has had sexual intercourse to separate from him.*[43] In my opinion this is the strongest of the reasons for *circumcision*. Who | first began to perform this act, if not *Abraham* who was celebrated for his chastity — as has been mentioned by the *Sages*,[44] *may their memory be blessed*, with reference to his dictum: *Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon.*[45]

According to me *circumcision* has another very important meaning,

41. Deut. 22:10. 42. Mishnah, Baba Qamma, V 7. 43. Genesis Rabbah, LXXX.
44. Cf. B.T., Baba Bathra, 16a. 45. Gen. 12:11.

namely, that all people professing this opinion—that is, those who believe in the *unity of God*—should have a bodily sign uniting them so that one who does not belong to them should not be able to claim that he was one of them, while being a stranger. For he would do this in order to profit by them or to deceive the people who profess this religion. Now a man does not perform this act[46] upon himself or upon a son of his unless it be in consequence of a genuine belief. For it is not like an incision in the leg or a burn in the arm, but is a very, very hard thing.

It is also well known what degree of mutual love and mutual help exists between people who all bear the same sign, which forms for them a sort of covenant and alliance. *Circumcision* is a covenant made by *Abraham our Father* with a view to the belief in the *unity of God*. Thus everyone who is circumcised joins *Abraham's covenant*. This covenant imposes the obligation to believe in the unity of God: *To be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.*[47] This also is a strong reason, as strong as the first, which may be adduced to account for *circumcision;* perhaps it is even stronger than the first.

The perfection and perpetuation of this Law can only be achieved if circumcision is performed in childhood. For this there are three wise reasons. The first is that if the child were let alone until he grew up, he would sometimes not perform it. The second is that a child does not suffer as much pain as a grown-up man because his membrane is still soft and his imagination weak; for a grown-up man would regard the thing, which he would imagine before it occurred, as terrible and hard. The third is that the parents of a child | that is just born take lightly matters concerning it, for up to that time the imaginative form that compels the parents to love it is not yet consolidated. For this imaginative form increases through habitual contact and grows with the growth of the child. Then it begins to decrease and to disappear, I refer to this imaginative form. For the love of the father and of the mother for the child when it has just been born is not like their love for it when it is one year old, and their love for it when it is one year old is not like their love when it is six years old. Consequently if it were left uncircumcised for two or three years, this would necessitate the abandonment of circumcision because of the father's love and affection for it. At the time of its birth, on the other hand, this imaginative form is very weak, especially as far as concerns the father upon whom this *commandment* is imposed.[48]

46. I.e., circumcision. 47. Gen. 17:7. 48. Cf. B.T., Qiddushin, 29a.

The fact that *circumcision* is performed on the eighth day is due to the circumstance that all living beings are very weak and exceedingly tender when they are born, as if they were still in the womb. This is so until seven days are past. It is only then that they are counted among those who have contact with the air. Do you not see that this point is also taken into account with regard to beasts?—*Seven days shall it be with its dam, and so on.*[49] It is as if before that period it were an abortion. Similarly with regard to man; he is circumcised after seven days have passed. In this way the matter is fixed: *You do not make out of it something that varies.*

This class of commandments also includes the prohibition against mutilating the sexual organs of all the males of animals,[50] which is based on the principle of *righteous statutes and judgments,*[51] I mean the principle of keeping the mean in all matters; sexual intercourse should neither be excessively indulged, as we have mentioned, nor wholly abolished. Did He[52] not command and say: *Be fruitful and multiply?*[53] Accordingly this organ is weakened by means of circumcision, but not extirpated through excision.[54] | What is natural is left according to nature, but measures are taken against excess. *He that is wounded in the stones or hath his privy member cut off*[55] is forbidden to marry a *woman of Israel,* for such cohabitation would be perverted and aimless. Such a marriage would likewise be a *stumbling-block* for the woman and for him who seeks her out. This is very clear.

In order to deter people from *illicit unions,* a *bastard* is forbidden to marry a *daughter of Israel;*[56] so that the adulterous man and adulterous woman should know that by committing their act they attach to their descendants a stigma that can never be effaced. The children born of adultery being, moreover, always despised to every way of life and in every nation,[57] the *seed of Israel* is regarded as too noble to mix with *bastards.*

Because of the nobility of *Priests* they are forbidden to marry a *prostitute,* a *divorced woman,* and a *woman born of the illicit marriage* [*of a Priest*].[58] The *High Priest,* who is the noblest among the *Priests,* is even forbidden to marry a *widow* and a *woman that is not a virgin.*[59] The reason for all this is clear. Mingling of *bastards* with the *congregation of the Lord*[60] being forbidden, that of *male and female slaves* with it is prohibited all the more.

The reason for the prohibition of intermarriage with the *Gentiles* is

49. Exod. 22:29. 50. Cf. Lev. 22:24. 51. Deut. 4:8.
52. Or: it (i.e., Scripture). 53. Gen. 1:22. 54. Or: entirely extirpated.
55. Cf. Deut. 23:2. 56. Cf. Deut. 23:3. 57. Or: religious community.
58. Literally: *profaned woman.* Cf. Lev. 21:7; B.T., Qiddushin, 77a.
59. Cf. Lev. 21:13–14. 60. Deut. 23:3.

explained in the text of the *Torah: And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and so on.*[61]

In the case of most of the *statutes* whose reason is hidden from us, everything serves to keep people away from *idolatry*. The fact that there are particulars the reason for which is hidden from me and the utility of which I do not understand, is due to the circumstance that things known by hearsay are not like things that one has seen. Hence the extent of my knowledge of the ways of the Sabians drawn from books[62] is not comparable to the knowledge of one who saw their practices with his eyes; this is even more the case since these opinions have disappeared two thousand years ago or even before that. If we knew the particulars of those practices and heard details concerning those opinions, we would become clear regarding the wisdom manifested in the details of the practices prescribed in the commandments concerning | the *sacrifices* and the forms of *uncleanness* and other matters whose reason cannot, to my mind, be easily grasped. For I for one do not doubt that all this was intended to efface those untrue opinions from the mind and to abolish those useless practices, which brought about a waste of lives *in vain and futile things.*[63] Those opinions turned away human thought from concern with the conception of an intelligible and from useful actions, as our prophets have explained to us, and have said: *They walked after vain things that do not profit.*[64] *Jeremiah* says: *Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.*[65] Consider how great was the extent of this corruption and whether or not it was fitting to spend one's efforts on putting an end to this. Most of the *commandments* serve, therefore, as we have made clear, to put an end to these opinions and to lighten the great and oppressive burdens, the toil and the fatigue, that those people imposed upon themselves in their cult. Accordingly every commandment or prohibition of the Law whose reason is hidden from you constitutes a cure for one of those diseases, which today—thank God—we do not know any more. This is what should be believed by one who is endowed with perfection and knows the true meaning of His dictum, may He be exalted: *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me for nothing.*[66]

61. Exod. 34:16. 62. Literally: which I have heard from books.
63. Cf. Isa. 49:4.
64. Jer. 2:8. The text of Jeremiah reads: *They walked after things that do not profit.* Maimonides may also have had in mind the passage in I Sam. 12:21. Cf. III 29, n. 23.
65. Jer. 16:19. 66. Isa. 45:19.

I have now dealt one by one with all the *commandments* included in these classes and we have drawn attention to the reasons for them. There are only a few and some slight details for which I have not given reasons, even though in truth we have virtually given reasons also for these to him who is attentive and comprehending. |

CHAPTER 50

There are also things that belong to the *mysteries of the Torah*, which have caused many people to stumble. Accordingly they ought to be explained. These are the stories recounted in the *Torah* the telling of which is thought to be useless, as for instance the account of the branching out of tribes from *Noah* and of their names and dwelling places,[1] likewise the *sons of Seʿir the Horite*[2] and the account of *the kings that reigned in the land of Edom*[3] and the like. You know the saying of [the Sages] that *the impious Manasseh* occupied his vile council with nothing but criticism of such passages. They say:[4] *He used to sit there and interpret Scripture by means of blasphemous haggadoth. Thus he said: Moses did not have to write: And the sister of Lotan was Timna, and so on.*[5] As for me I shall inform you of a general principle, and then I shall come back to the details as I did with regard to the reasons for the *commandments*.

Know that all the stories that you will find mentioned in the *Torah* occur there for a necessary utility for the Law; either they give a correct notion of an opinion that is a pillar of the Law, or they rectify some action so that mutual wrongdoing and aggression should not occur between men. I shall set this forth to you in an orderly fashion.

As it is a pillar of the Law that the world was produced in time, that at first a single individual of the human species, namely, *Adam*, was created, and that approximately two thousand five hundred years elapsed between *Adam* and *Moses our Master*, men, if they were given this information only, would rapidly have begun to have doubts in those times. For people were to be found scattered up to the ends of the whole earth; there were | different tribes and different and very dissimilar languages. These doubts were put to an end through an exposition of the genealogy of all of them

1. Cf. Gen. 10. 2. Gen. 36:20. 3. Gen. 36:31. 4. B.T., Sanhedrin, 99b.
5. Gen. 36:22.

and of their branching by mentioning the names of the famous men among them—such and such, the son of such and such—and their ages and by giving the facts regarding their habitats and the reason that necessitated their being scattered up to the ends of the earth and their languages being different in spite of their having at first dwelt in one place and having had all of them one language, a fact that was a necessary consequence of their being the children of a single individual.

In the same way the story of the *Flood* and the story of *Sodom and Gomorrah* were recounted in order to bring proof for the following correct opinion: *Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth on the earth.*[6] In the same way the relation of that *war* of the nine kings is made with a view to making known to us the miracle consisting in the victory of *Abraham*, accompanied by a small number of men having no king with them, over four great kings. It also gives us knowledge of his defense of his relative because of the latter's sharing his belief, and of his exposing himself to the dangers of war until he saved him. It also gives us knowledge of how moderate and easily satisfied he was, of his contempt for acquisition, and of his striving for moral nobility. This is expressed by his saying: *From a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and so on.*[7]

The enumeration of the tribes of the *children of Seʿir* and of their individual genealogy[8] is made with a view to *one single commandment;* for He, may He be exalted, has commanded exterminating only the *seed of ʿAmaleq*. Now *ʿAmaleq was the son of Eliphaz* and *Timna the sister of Lotan.*[9] He did not command killing the other *children of Esau.* Now *Esau* was connected by marriage with the *children of Seʿir*, as is set forth in the text;[10] he had issue from them and reigned over them, and his descendants mingled with theirs. Consequently the whole land of *Seʿir* and those tribes were called after the predominant tribe—namely, the *children of Esau*—and particularly the descendants of | *ʿAmaleq*, for they were the bravest among them. Accordingly if there had been no explanation concerning these genealogies and their particulars, all of them would have been killed through neglectfulness. Consequently Scripture explained their tribes and said that those whom you see today in *Seʿir* and the kingdom of *ʿAmaleq* are not all of them *children of ʿAmaleq*, but some of them are descendants of this or that individual and are only called after *ʿAmaleq* because the latter's mother belonged to them. All this was an act of justice on the part of God lest a tribe be killed indiscriminately in the course of the extermination of another

6. Ps. 58:12. 7. Gen. 14:23. 8. Cf. Gen. 36:20–30.
9. Cf. Gen. 36:12 and 22. 10. Cf. Gen. 36:25.

tribe. For the *Decree* was only directed against the descendants of *ʿAmaleq*, and we have already explained in what way wisdom is manifested therein.[11]

The reason for [Scripture's] enumeration of *the kings that reigned in the land of Edom*[12] is the fact that according to one of the *commandments: Thou mayest not set a foreigner over thee, who is not thy brother.*[13] Now not one of the kings that are enumerated is from *Edom*. Do you not see that it sets forth their genealogy and their country?—this one was from this place and that one from that place. In my opinion it is probable that their conduct and their histories were generally known—I mean the conduct of those *kings of Edom*, and that they tyrannized over the *children of Esau* and humiliated them. Accordingly in mentioning them, it says as it were: Consider your brethren, the *children of Esau*, whose kings were this one and that one—whose actions were generally known. For no individual has ever been the chief of a religious community to whose race he did not belong, without doing it great or small injury.

To sum up: Just as, according to what I have told you, the doctrines of the Sabians are remote from us today,[14] the chronicles of those times are likewise hidden from us today. Hence if we knew them and were cognizant of the events that happened in those days, we would know in detail the reasons of many things mentioned in the *Torah*.

You should also understand that the status | of things that are set down in writing is not the same as the status of happenings that one sees. For in happenings that one sees, there are particulars that bring about necessary consequences of great importance, which cannot be mentioned except in a prolix manner. Accordingly, when narrations concerning these happenings are considered, the individual who reflects thinks that such narrations are too long or repetitious. If, however, he had seen what is narrated, he would know the necessity of what is recounted. Hence when you see narrations in the *Torah* that do not belong to the Law and think that it was not necessary to set down such and such a narration or that it is too long or repetitious, the reason for this is that you have not seen the particulars that necessitated that the story be told in the manner it is.

Of this kind is the enumeration of the *stations* [of the Children of Israel in the desert]. Apparently this is an enumeration that is quite useless. Because of this false fancy, which first comes to the mind, it says: *And Moses wrote their goings forth, according to their stations, by the commandment of the Lord.*[15] Now the need for this was very great. For all miracles are certain

11. Cf. III 41. 12. Gen. 36:31. 13. Deut. 17:15. 14. Cf. III 49.
15. Num. 33:2.

in the opinion of one who has seen them; however, at a future time their story becomes a mere traditional narrative, and there is a possibility for the hearer to consider it untrue. It is well known that it is impossible and inconceivable that a miracle lasts permanently throughout the succession of generations so that all men can see it. Now one of the miracles of the Law, and one of the greatest among them, is the sojourn of *Israel* for forty years in the *desert* and the finding of the *manna* there every day. For that *desert* was, as is stated in Scripture, a place *wherein were serpents, fiery serpents, and scorpions, and thirsty ground where there was no water.*[16] Those are places that are very remote from cultivated land and unnatural for man; *it is no place of seed or of figs or of vines or of pomegranates, and so on.*[17] It is also said of it that it is *a land that no man passed through, and so on.*[18] The text of the *Torah* states: *Ye have not eaten bread, | neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink, and so on.*[19] All these are manifest visible miracles. Now God, may He be exalted, knew that in the future what happens to traditional narratives would happen to those miracles: People would think that [the Children of Israel] sojourned in a desert that was near to cultivated land and in which man can live, like the deserts inhabited at present by the Arabs, or that it consisted of places in which it was possible to till and to reap or to feed on plants that were to be found there, or that it was natural for the *manna* always to come down in those places, or that there were wells of water in those places. Therefore all these fancies are rebutted and the traditional relation of all these miracles is confirmed through the enumeration of those stations, so that men to come could see them and thus know how great was the miracle constituted by the sojourn of the human species in those places for forty years. For the same reason *Joshua* cursed him who would *ever* build up *Jericho*,[20] so that this miracle should subsist permanently. For whoever would see the wall sunk in the ground, would clearly understand that such cannot be the aspect of a demolished building, but that this building sank through a miracle.

Similarly also its dictum, *At the commandment of the Lord they pitched and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed*,[21] might suffice for the narrative; and it might appear, when one thinks about it at first, that everything dealing with this subject that comes afterwards is needless expatiation on the matter—I refer to its saying: *And when the cloud tarried long, and so on.*[22] *And so it was when the cloud was, and so on.*[23] *Or whether it were two*

16. Deut. 8:15. 17. Num. 20:5. 18. Jer. 2:6. 19. Deut. 29:5.
20. Cf. Josh. 6:26. 21. Num. 9:20. 22. Num. 9:19. 23. Num. 9:21.

days, and so on.[24] I shall inform you of the reason for all those particulars being given. The reason is that this story was to be confirmed with a view to the destruction of the opinion held at that time and even up to now by the religious communities, that [the Children of] *Israel* lost their way and did not know where they were going — just as it is said [in Scripture:] *They are perplexed | in the land.*[25] Thus the Arabs at present designate it — I mean the *desert* — as al-Tīh, thinking that [the Children of] *Israel* lost their way [tāhū] and did not know the road. Scripture accordingly is engaged in expounding and corroborating the fact that those irregular stations, the return to some of them, and the difference between the lengths of their staying at every station — so that they stayed at one station eighteen years,[26] at another one day, and at a third one night[27] — were all of them determined by divine decree and that this was not due to their having lost their way, but depended on the rising of the *pillar of cloud.* Therefore all these particulars are given. The *Torah* has already made it clear that that stretch of road was short, known, much frequented, that it was by no means unknown; I refer to the stretch between *Horeb* — where they betook themselves with a certain purpose according to what He, may He be exalted, has commanded: *Ye shall serve God upon this mountain*[28] — and *Kadesh-Barnea* — where the cultivated land begins according to the text: *Behold we are now in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border.*[29] The length of this stretch is an eleven days' march, according to what it says: *Eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seʿir unto Kadesh-Barnea.*[30] This is not a road in which one may err for forty years. The reason for their tarrying are the causes literally stated in the *Torah.*

In a similar way whenever the cause for a story's being narrated is hidden from thee, there is a strong reason for that story. Apply to the whole matter the principle to which [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed,* have drawn our attention: *For it is no vain thing from you*[31] — *And if it is vain, it is so because of you.*[32] |

24. Num. 9:22. 25. Exod. 14:3. 26. Cf. Seder ʿOlam Rabbah, VIII.
27. Cf. Num. 9:21. 28. Exod. 3:12. 29. Num. 20:16. 30. Deut. 1:2.
31. Deut. 32:47. 32. J.T., Peʾah, I. Cf. III 26.

CHAPTER 51

This chapter that we bring now does not include additional matter over and above what is comprised in the other chapters of this Treatise. It is only a kind of a conclusion, at the same time explaining the worship as practiced by one who has apprehended the true realities peculiar only to Him after he has obtained an apprehension of what He is; and it also guides him toward achieving this worship, which is the end of man, and makes known to him how providence watches over him in this habitation until he is brought over to the *bundle of life*.[1]

I shall begin the discourse in this chapter with a parable that I shall compose for you. I say then: The ruler is in his palace, and all his subjects are partly within the city and partly outside the city. Of those who are within the city, some have turned their backs upon the ruler's habitation, their faces being turned another way. Others seek to reach the ruler's habitation, turn toward it, and desire to enter it and to stand before him, but up to now they have not yet seen the wall of the habitation. Some of those who seek to reach it have come up to the habitation and walk around it searching for its gate. Some of them have entered the gate and walk about in the antechambers. Some of them have entered the inner court of the habitation and have come to be with the king, in one and the same place with him, namely, in the ruler's habitation. But their having come into the inner part of the habitation does not mean that they see the ruler or speak to him. For after their coming into the inner part of the habitation, it is indispensable that they should make another effort; then they will be in the presence of the ruler, see him from afar or from nearby, or | hear the ruler's speech or speak to him.

Now I shall interpret to you this parable that I have invented. I say then: Those who are outside the city are all human individuals who have no doctrinal belief, neither one based on speculation nor one that accepts the authority of tradition: such individuals as the furthermost Turks found in the remote North, the Negroes found in the remote South, and those who resemble them from among them that are with us in these climes. The status of those is like that of irrational animals. To my mind they do not have the rank of men, but have among the beings a rank lower than the rank of man but higher than the rank of the apes. For they have the external shape

1. Cf. I Sam. 25:29. According to the commentators, these words refer to eternal life.

and lineaments of a man and a faculty of discernment that is superior to that of the apes.

Those who are within the city, but have turned their backs upon the ruler's habitation, are people who have opinions and are engaged in speculation, but who have adopted incorrect opinions either because of some great error that befell them in the course of their speculation or because of their following the traditional authority of one who had fallen into error. Accordingly because of these opinions, the more these people walk, the greater is their distance from the ruler's habitation. And they are far worse than the first. They are those concerning whom necessity at certain times impels killing them and blotting out the traces of their opinions lest they should lead astray the ways of others.

Those who seek to reach the ruler's habitation and to enter it, but never see the ruler's habitation, are the multitude of the adherents of the Law, I refer to *the ignoramuses who observe the commandments.*

Those who have come up to the habitation and walk around it are the jurists who believe true opinions on the basis of traditional authority and study the law concerning the practices of divine service, but do not engage in speculation concerning the fundamental principles of religion and make no inquiry whatever regarding | the rectification of belief.

Those who have plunged into speculation concerning the fundamental principles of religion, have entered the antechambers. People there indubitably have different ranks. He, however, who has achieved demonstration, to the extent that that is possible, of everything that may be demonstrated; and who has ascertained in divine matters, to the extent that that is possible, everything that may be ascertained; and who has come close to certainty in those matters in which one can only come close to it — has come to be with the ruler in the inner part of the habitation.

Know, my son, that as long as you are engaged in studying the mathematical sciences and the art of logic, you are one of those who walk around the house searching for its gate, as [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed,* have said resorting to a parable: *Ben Zoma is still outside.*[2] If, however, you have understood the natural things, you have entered the habitation and are walking in the antechambers. If, however, you have achieved perfection in the natural things and have understood divine science, you have entered in the ruler's place *into the inner court* and are with him in one habitation. This is the rank of the men of science; they, however, are of different grades of perfection.

2. B.T., Ḥagigah, 15a.

There are those who set their thought to work after having attained perfection in the divine science, turn wholly toward God, may He be cherished and held sublime, renounce what is other than He, and direct all the acts of their intellect toward an examination of the beings with a view to drawing from them proof with regard to Him, so as to know His governance of them in whatever way it is possible. These people are those who are present in the ruler's council. This is the rank of the prophets. Among them there is he[3] who because of the greatness of his apprehension and his renouncing everything that is other than God, may He be exalted, has attained such a degree that it is said of him, *And he was there with the Lord*,[4] putting questions and receiving answers, speaking and being spoken to, in that holy place. And because of his great joy | in that which he apprehended, *he did neither eat bread nor drink water*.[5] For his intellect attained such strength that all the gross faculties in the body ceased to function. I refer to the various kinds of the sense of touch. Some prophets could only see, some of them from close by and some from afar, as [a prophet] says: *From afar the Lord appeared unto me*.[6] The various degrees of prophecy have already been discussed by us.[7] Let us now return to the subject of this chapter, which is to confirm men in the intention to set their thought to work on God alone after they have achieved knowledge of Him, as we have explained. This is the worship peculiar to those who have apprehended the true realities; the more they think of Him and of being with Him, the more their worship increases.

As for someone who thinks and frequently mentions God, without knowledge, following a mere imagining or following a belief adopted because of his reliance on the authority of somebody else, he is to my mind outside the habitation and far away from it and does not in true reality mention or think about God. For that thing which is in his imagination and which he mentions in his speech[8] does not correspond to any being at all and has merely been invented by his imagination, as we have explained in our discourse concerning the attributes.[9] This kind of worship ought only to be engaged in after intellectual conception has been achieved. If, however, you have apprehended God and His acts in accordance with what is required by the intellect, you should afterwards engage in totally devoting yourself to Him, endeavor to come closer to Him, and strengthen the bond between you and Him—that is, the intellect. Thus it says: *Unto thee it was shown, that thou mightest know that the Lord, and so on;*[10] and it says: *Know this day*,

3. Or: there are those. 4. Exod. 34:28. 5. Exod. 34:28. 6. Jer. 31:3.
7. Cf. II 45. 8. Literally: in his mouth. 9. Cf. I 50. 10. Deut. 4:35.

and lay it to thy heart, and so on;[11] and it says: *Know ye that the Lord He is God.*[12] The *Torah* has made it clear that this last worship to which we have drawn attention in this chapter can only be engaged in after apprehension has been achieved; | it says: *To love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*[13] Now we have made it clear several times[14] that love is proportionate to apprehension. After *love* comes this worship to which attention has also been drawn by [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, who said: *This is the worship in the heart.*[15] In my opinion it consists in setting thought to work on the first intelligible and in devoting oneself exclusively to this as far as this is within one's capacity. Therefore you will find that *David* exhorted *Solomon* and fortified him in these two things, I mean his endeavor to apprehend Him and his endeavor to worship Him after apprehension has been achieved. He said: *And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father and serve Him, and so on. If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee, and so on.*[16] The exhortation always refers to intellectual apprehensions, not to imagination; for thought concerning imaginings is not called *knowledge* but *that which cometh into your mind.*[17] Thus it is clear that after apprehension, total devotion to Him and the employment of intellectual thought in constantly loving Him should be aimed at. Mostly this is achieved in solitude and isolation. Hence every excellent man stays frequently in solitude and does not meet anyone unless it is necessary.

A call to attention. We have already made it clear to you[18] that that intellect which overflowed from Him, may He be exalted, toward us is the bond between us and Him. You have the choice: if you wish to strengthen and to fortify this bond,[19] you can do so; if, however, you wish gradually to make it weaker and feebler until you cut it, you can also do that. You can only strengthen this bond by employing it in loving Him and in progressing toward this, just as we have explained. And it is made weaker and feebler if you busy your thought with what is other than He. Know that even if you were the man who knew most the true reality of the divine science, you would cut that bond existing between you and God if you would empty your thought | of God and busy yourself totally in eating the necessary or in occupying yourselves with the necessary. You would not be with Him then, nor He with you. For that relation between you and Him is actually broken off at that time. It is for this reason that excellent men begrudge the

11. Deut. 4:39. 12. Ps. 100:3. 13. Deut. 11:13. 14. Cf. I 39 and III 28.
15. B.T., Taʿanith, 2a; J.T., Berakhoth, IV. 16. I Chron. 28:9. 17. Ezek. 20:32.
18. Cf. II 12 and 37. 19. I.e., the intellect.

times in which they are turned away from Him by other occupations and warn against this, saying: *Do not let God be absent from your thought.*[20] And *David* says: *I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not bend down;*[21] he means to say: I do not empty my thought of Him, and it is as if He were my right hand from which, because of the rapidity of its motion, my attention is not distracted even for an instant, and therefore I do not bend down – that is, I do not fall.

Know that all the practices of the worship, such as reading the *Torah*, prayer, and the performance of the other *commandments*, have only the end of training you to occupy yourself with His commandments, may He be exalted, rather than with matters pertaining to this world; you should act as if you were occupied with Him, may He be exalted, and not with that which is other than He. If, however, you pray merely by moving your lips while facing a wall, and at the same time think about your buying and selling; or if you read the *Torah* with your tongue while your heart is set upon the building of your habitation and does not consider what you read; and similarly in all cases in which you perform a *commandment* merely with your limbs – as if you were digging a hole in the ground or hewing wood in the forest – without reflecting either upon the meaning of that action or upon Him from whom the commandment proceeds or upon the end of the action, you should not think that you have achieved the end. Rather you will then be similar to those of whom it is said: *Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.*[22]

From here on I will begin to give you guidance with regard to the form of this training so that you should achieve this great end. The first thing that you should cause your soul to hold fast onto is | that, while *reciting* the *Shema*[c] prayer, you should empty your mind of everything and pray thus. You should not content yourself with *being intent* while *reciting the first verse of Shema*[c] and saying *the first benediction*. When this has been carried out correctly and has been practiced consistently for years, cause your soul, whenever you read or listen to the *Torah*, to be constantly directed – the whole of you and your thought – toward reflection on what you are listening to or reading. When this too has been practiced consistently for a certain time, cause your soul to be in such a way that your thought is always quite free of distraction and gives heed to all that you are reading of the other discourses of the prophets[23] and even when you read all the *benedictions*, so that you aim at meditating on what you are uttering and at considering its meaning. If, however, while performing these acts of worship, you are free

20. B.T., Shabbath, 149a. 21. Ps. 16:8. 22. Jer. 12:2. 23. I.e., not only of the Torah.

from distraction and not engaged in thinking upon any of the things pertaining to this world, cause your soul – after this has been achieved – to occupy your thought with things necessary for you or superfluous in your life, and in general with *worldly things*, while you eat or drink or bathe or talk with your wife and your small children, or while you talk with the common run of people. Thus I have provided you with many and long stretches of time in which you can think all that needs thinking regarding property, the governance of the household, and the welfare of the body. On the other hand, while performing the actions imposed by the Law, you should occupy your thought only with what you are doing, just as we have explained. When, however, you are alone with yourself and no one else is there and while you lie awake upon your bed, you should take great care during these precious times not to set your thought to work on anything other than that intellectual worship | consisting in nearness to God and being in His presence in that true reality that I have made known to you and not by way of affections of the imagination. In my opinion this end can be achieved by those of the men of knowledge who have rendered their souls worthy of it by training of this kind.

And there may be a human individual who, through his apprehension of the true realities and his joy in what he has apprehended, achieves a state in which he talks with people and is occupied with his bodily necessities while his intellect is wholly turned toward Him, may He be exalted, so that in his heart he is always in His presence, may He be exalted, while outwardly he is with people, in the sort of way described by the poetical parables that have been invented for these notions: *I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, and so on.*[24] I do not say that this rank is that of all the prophets; but I do say that this is the rank of *Moses our Master*, of whom it is said: *And Moses alone shall come near unto the Lord; but they shall not come near;*[25] and of whom it is said: *And he was there with the Lord;*[26] and to whom it was said: *But as for thee, stand thou here by Me.*[27] All this according to what we have explained regarding the meaning of these *verses.*[28] This was also the rank of the *Patriarchs*, the result of whose nearness to Him, may He be exalted, was that His name became known to the world through them: *The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob . . .; this is My name for ever.*[29] Because of the union of their intellects through apprehension of Him, it came about

24. Song of Songs 5:2. 25. Exod. 24:2. 26. Exod. 34:28. 27. Deut. 5:28.
28. Cf. I 13, II 32, III 51 above.
29. Exod. 3:15. The Hebrew expression translated: *for ever*, may also mean: *for the world.*

that He made a lasting *covenant* with each of them: *Then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and so on.*[30] For in those four, I mean the *Patriarchs* and *Moses our Master*, union with God – I mean apprehension of Him and love of Him – became manifest, as the texts testify. Also the providence of God watching over them and over their posterity was great. Withal they were occupied with governing people, increasing their fortune, | and endeavoring to acquire property. Now this is to my mind a proof that they performed these actions with their limbs only, while their intellects were constantly in His presence, may He be exalted. It also seems to me that the fact that these four were in a permanent state of extreme perfection in the eyes of God, and that His providence watched over them continually even while they were engaged in increasing their fortune -- I mean while they tended their cattle, did agricultural work, and governed their household – was necessarily brought about by the circumstance that in all these actions their end was to come near to Him, may He be exalted; and how near! For the end of their efforts during their life was to bring into being a religious community that would know and worship God. *For I have known him, to the end that he may command, and so on.*[31] Thus it has become clear to you that the end of all their efforts was to spread the doctrine of *the unity of the Name in the world* and to guide people to love Him, may He be exalted. Therefore this rank befitted them, for these actions were pure worship of great import. This rank is not a rank that, with a view to the attainment of which, someone like myself may aspire for guidance.[32] But one may aspire to attain that rank which was mentioned before this one through the training that we described. One must beseech God that He remove the obstructions that separate us from Him, even though most of them come from us, as we have explained in certain chapters of this Treatise:[33] *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.*[34]

A most extraordinary speculation has occurred to me just now through which doubts may be dispelled and divine secrets revealed. We have already explained in the chapters concerning providence that providence watches over everyone endowed with intellect proportionately to the measure of his intellect. Thus providence always watches over an individual endowed with perfect apprehension, whose intellect | never ceases from being occupied with God. On the other hand, an individual endowed with

30. Lev. 26:42. 31. Gen. 18:19.

32. The Arabic phrase can have two meanings: (*a*) Someone like myself cannot aspire to be guided with a view to achieving this rank; (*b*) Someone like myself cannot aspire to guide others with a view to their achieving this rank.

33. Cf., e.g., III 12. 34. Isa. 59:2.

perfect apprehension, whose thought sometimes for a certain time is emptied of God, is watched over by providence only during the time when he thinks of God; providence withdraws from him during the time when he is occupied with something else. However, its withdrawal then is not like its withdrawal from those who have never had intellectual cognition. But in his case that providence merely decreases because that man of perfect apprehension has, while being occupied, no intellect in actu; but that perfect man is at such times only apprehending potentially, though close to actuality. At such times he is like a skillful scribe at the time when he is not writing. On the other hand, he who has no intellectual cognition at all of God is like one who is in darkness and has never seen light, just as we have explained[35] with regard to its dictum: *The wicked shall be put to silence in darkness.*[36] He who apprehends and advances with his whole being toward the object of his apprehension, is like one who is in the pure light of the sun. He who has had apprehension, but is occupied, is while he is occupied in this state like one who has a cloudy day in which the sun does not shine because of the clouds that separate it and him. Hence it seems to me that all prophets or excellent and perfect men whom one of the evils of this world befell, had this evil happen to them during such a time of distraction, the greatness of the calamity being proportionate to the duration of the period of distraction or to the vileness of the matter with which he was occupied. If this is so, the great doubt that induced the philosophers to deny that divine providence watches over all human individuals and to assert equality between them and the individuals of the other kinds of animals is dispelled. For their proof for this opinion was the fact that excellent and good men experienced great misfortunes. Thus | the secret with regard to this has been explained even according to the requirements of their opinions: The providence of God, may He be exalted, is constantly watching over those who have obtained this overflow, which is permitted to everyone who makes efforts with a view to obtaining it. If a man's thought is free from distraction, if he apprehends Him, may He be exalted, in the right way and rejoices in what he apprehends, that individual can never be afflicted with evil of any kind. For he is with God and God is with him. When, however, he abandons Him, may He be exalted, and is thus separated from God and God separated from him, he becomes in consequence of this a target for every evil that may happen to befall him. For the thing that necessarily brings about providence and deliverance from the sea of chance consists in that intellectual overflow. Yet an impediment may

35. Cf. III 18. 36. I Sam. 2:9.

prevent for some time its reaching the excellent and good man in question, or again it was not obtained at all by such and such imperfect and wicked man, and therefore the chance occurrences that befell them happened. To my mind this belief is also shown as true by a text of the *Torah;* He, may He be exalted, says: *And I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall come upon them; so that they will say in that day: Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?*[37] It is clear that we are the cause of this *hiding of the face*, and we are the agents who produce this separation. This is the meaning of His saying: *And I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evil which they shall have wrought.*[38] There is no doubt that what is true of one is true of a community. Thus it has become clear to you that the reason for a human individual's being abandoned to chance so that he is permitted to be devoured like the beasts is his being separated from God. If, however, *his God is within him*, no evil at all will befall him. For He, may He be exalted, says: *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God, and so on.*[39] He says: *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, | they shall not overflow thee, and so on.*[40] The determination that *when thou passest through the waters and I will be with thee, the rivers shall not overflow thee*, is accounted for by the fact that everyone who has rendered himself so worthy that the intellect in question overflows toward him, has providence attached to him, while all evils are prevented from befalling him. It says: *The Lord is for me, I will not fear; what can man do unto me?*[41] And it says, *Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace,*[42] meaning to say: turn toward Him and you will be safe from all ill.

Consider the *song on mishaps:* You will find that it describes this great providence and the safeguard and the protection from all bodily ills, both the general ones and those that concern one individual rather than another, so that neither those that are consequent upon the nature of being nor those that are due to the plotting of man would occur. It says: *That He will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His pinions, and under His wings shalt thou take refuge; His truth is a shield and a buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flieth by day; of the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor of the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*[43] He then goes on to describe the protection against the plotting of men, saying: If you should happen to

37. Deut. 31:17. 38. Deut. 31:18. 39. Isa. 41:10. 40. Isa. 43:2.
41. Ps. 118:6. 42. Job 22:21. 43. Ps. 91:3–6.

pass on your way a widely extended field of battle and even if one thousand were killed to your left and ten thousand to your right, no evil at all would befall you. Do you not perceive and see with your eye God's judgment and retribution directed against the wicked that are killed while you are safe? These are its words: *A thousand may fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the recompense of the wicked.*[44] This is followed by what is said about divine safeguard; then it gives the reason for this great protection, saying that the reason for this great providence being effective with regard to the individual in question is this: *Because he hath set his passionate love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known My Name.*[45] We have already explained in preceding chapters that the meaning of *knowledge of the Name* | is: apprehension of Him. It is as if [the psalm] said that this individual is protected because he hath known Me and then passionately loved Me.[46] You know the difference between the terms *one who loves* [*oheb*] and *one who loves passionately* [*ḥosheq*]; an excess of love [mahabbah], so that no thought remains that is directed toward a thing other than the Beloved, is passionate love [ʿishq].

The philosophers have already explained that the bodily faculties impede in youth the attainment of most of the moral virtues, and all the more that of pure thought, which is achieved through the perfection of the intelligibles that lead to passionate love of Him, may He be exalted. For it is impossible that it should be achieved while the bodily humors are in effervescence. Yet in the measure in which the faculties of the body are weakened and the fire of the desires is quenched, the intellect is strengthened, its lights achieve a wider extension, its apprehension is purified, and it rejoices in what it apprehends. The result is that when a perfect man is stricken with years and approaches death, this apprehension increases very powerfully, joy over this apprehension and a great love for the object of apprehension become stronger, until the soul is separated from the body at that moment in this state of pleasure. Because of this the *Sages* have indicated with reference to the deaths of *Moses, Aaron, and Miriam* that

44. Ps. 91:7–8. 45. Ps. 91:14.

46. *ʿashiqanī*. The meaning of the Arabic verb *ʿashiqa* corresponds to that of the Hebrew verb *ḥashoq* (from which the participle *ḥosheq*, mentioned by Maimonides in this passage, is derived). Both may signify: "to love passionately." On the other hand, the Arabic verbal form *aḥabba* (from which the word *maḥabbah*, likewise mentioned by Maimonides in this passage, is derived), corresponds to the Hebrew word *ahob*, from which the participle *oheb* is derived. Both the Hebrew and the Arabic verb mean: "to love."

the three of them died by a kiss. They said[47] that the dictum [of Scripture], *And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab by the mouth of the Lord,*[48] *indicates that he died by a kiss.* Similarly it is said of *Aaron: By the mouth of the Lord, and died there.*[49] And they said of *Miriam* in the same way: *She also died by a kiss.* But with regard to her it is not said, *by the mouth of the Lord*; because she was a woman, the use of the figurative expression was not suitable with regard to her. Their purpose was to indicate that the three of them died in the pleasure of this apprehension due to the intensity of passionate love. In this dictum the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* followed the generally accepted poetical way of expression that calls the apprehension | that is achieved in a state of intense and passionate love for Him, may He be exalted, *a kiss,* in accordance with its dictum: *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, and so on.*[50] [The Sages], *may their memory be blessed,* mention the occurrence of this kind of death, which in true reality is salvation from death, only with regard to *Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.* The other prophets and excellent men are beneath this degree; but it holds good for all of them that the apprehension of their intellects becomes stronger at the separation, just as it is said: *And thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be at thy rear.*[51] After having reached this condition of enduring permanence, that intellect remains in one and the same state, the impediment that sometimes screened him off having been removed. And he will remain permanently in that state of intense pleasure, which does not belong to the genus of bodily pleasures, as we have explained in our compilations and as others have explained before us.

Bring your soul to understand this chapter, and direct your efforts to the multiplying of those times[52] in which you are with God or endeavoring to approach Him and to decreasing those times in which you are with other than He and in which you make no efforts to approach Him. This guidance is sufficient in view of the purpose of this Treatise.

47. B.T., Baba Bathra, 17a. 48. Deut. 34:5. 49. Num. 33:38.
50. Song of Songs 1:2. 51. Isa. 58:8. 52. Or: moments.

CHAPTER 52

Man does not sit, move, and occupy himself when he is alone in his house, as he sits, moves, and occupies himself when he is in the presence of a great king; nor does he speak and rejoice while he is with his family and relatives, as he speaks in the king's council. Therefore he who chooses to achieve human perfection and to be in true reality *a man of God* must give heed and know | that the great king who always accompanies him and cleaves to him is greater than any human individual, even if the latter be *David* and *Solomon*. This king who cleaves to him and accompanies him is the intellect that overflows toward us and is the bond between us and Him, may He be exalted. Just as we apprehend Him by means of that light which He caused to overflow toward us—as it says, *In Thy light do we see light*[1]—so does He by means of this selfsame light examine us; and because of it, He, may He be exalted, is constantly with us, examining from on high: *Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?*[2] Understand this well. Know that when perfect men understand this, they achieve such humility, such awe and fear of God, such reverence and such shame before Him, may He be exalted—and this in ways that pertain to true reality, not to imagination—that their secret conduct with their wives and in latrines is like their public conduct with other people. This, as you will find, was the way of our most renowned Sages with their wives: *One uncovers a handbreadth and covers up a handbreadth.*[3] They also said: *Who is modest? Whoever behaves by night as he behaves by day.*[4] You know already that they forbade[5] *walking about with an erect carriage because* [of the biblical dictum,] *The whole earth is full of His glory;*[6] all this being intended firmly to establish the notion that I have mentioned to you, that we are always before Him, may He be exalted, and walk about to and fro while His Indwelling is with us. And the greatest among the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* avoided uncovering their heads, because man is covered about by the *Indwelling*. They also spoke little for this reason. We have already given in [the Commentary on] *Aboth*[7] the explanation that was needed concerning the habit of speaking but little: *For God is in heaven and thou upon the earth; therefore let thy words be few.*[8]

This purpose to which I have drawn your attention is the purpose of all the actions prescribed by the Law. | For it is by all the particulars of the

1. Ps. 36:10. 2. Jer. 23:24. 3. B.T., Nedarim, 20a–b.
4. B.T., Berakhoth, 62a. 5. B.T., Qiddushin, 31a. 6. Isa. 6:3.
7. *Commentary on the Mishnah,* Aboth, I 17. 8. Eccles. 5:1.

actions and through their repetition that some excellent men obtain such training that they achieve human perfection, so that they fear, and are in dread and in awe of, God, may He be exalted, and know who it is that is with them and as a result act subsequently as they ought to. He, may He be exalted, has explained that the end of the actions prescribed by the whole Law is to bring about the passion of which it is correct that it be brought about, as we have demonstrated in this chapter for the benefit of those who know the true realities. I refer to the fear of Him, may He be exalted, and the awe before His command. It says: *If thou wilt not take care to observe all the words of this Law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful Name, the Lord thy God.*[9] Consider how it is explicitly stated for your benefit that the intention of *all the words of this Law* is one end, namely, *that thou mayest fear the Name, and so on.* The fact that this end is achieved through actions, you can learn from its dictum in this *verse*: *If thou wilt not take care to observe.* For it has already been made clear that this refers to actions prescribed by *commandments and prohibitions.* As for the opinions that the *Torah* teaches us—namely, the apprehension of His being and His unity, may He be exalted—these opinions teach us *love*, as we have explained several times. You know to what extent the *Torah* lays stress upon *love: With all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*[10] For these two ends, namely, *love* and *fear*, are achieved through two things: *love* through the opinions taught by the Law, which include the apprehension of His being as He, may He be exalted, is in truth; while *fear* is achieved by means of all actions prescribed by the Law, as we have explained. Understand this summary. |

CHAPTER 53

This chapter includes an interpretation of the meaning of three terms that we have need of interpreting: namely, *ḥesed* [*loving-kindness*], *mishpat* [*judgment*], and *ṣedaqah* [*righteousness*].

We have already explained in the Commentary on *Aboth*[1] that the meaning of *ḥesed* is excess in whatever matter excess is practiced. In most cases, however, it is applied to excess in beneficence. Now it is known that

9. Deut. 28:58. 10. Deut. 6:5.
1. *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Aboth, V 6, and II 10.

beneficence includes two notions, one of them consisting in the exercise of beneficence toward one who has no right at all to claim this from you, and the other consisting in the exercise of beneficence toward one who deserves it, but in a greater measure than he deserves it. In most cases the prophetic books use the word *ḥesed* in the sense of practicing beneficence toward one who has no right at all to claim this from you. Therefore every benefit that comes from Him, may He be exalted, is called *ḥesed*. Thus it says: *I will make mention of the loving-kindnesses* [*ḥasdei*] *of the Lord.*[2] Hence this reality as a whole—I mean that He, may He be exalted, has brought it into being—is *ḥesed*. Thus it says: *The world is built up in loving-kindness* [*ḥesed*];[3] the meaning of which is: *the building-up of the world is loving-kindness*. And He, may He be exalted, says in an enumeration of *His attributes: And abundant in loving-kindness.*[4]

The word *ṣedaqah* is derived from *ṣedeq*, which means justice; justice being the granting to everyone who has a right to something, that which he has a right to and giving to every being that which corresponds to his merits. But in the books of the prophets, fulfilling the duties imposed upon you with regard to others is not called *ṣedaqah* in conformity with the first sense. For if you give a hired man his wages or pay a debt, this is not called *ṣedaqah*. On the other hand, the fulfilling of duties with regard to others imposed upon you on account of moral virtue, such as remedying the injuries of all those who are injured, is called *ṣedaqah*. Therefore it says with reference to the returning | of a pledge:[5] *And it shall be ṣedaqah unto you.*[6] For when you walk in the way of the moral virtues, you do justice unto your rational soul, giving her the due that is her right. And because every moral virtue is called *ṣedaqah*, it says: *And he believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to him as ṣedaqah.*[7] I refer to the virtue of faith. This applies likewise to his dictum, may he be exalted: *And it shall be ṣedaqah unto us if we take care to observe, and so on.*[8]

As for the word *mishpat*, it means judgment concerning what ought to be done to one who is judged, whether in the way of conferring a benefit or of punishment.

Thus it has been summarized that *ḥesed* is applied to beneficence taken absolutely; *ṣedaqah*, to every good action performed by you because of a moral virtue with which you perfect your soul; and *mishpat* sometimes has as its consequence punishment and sometimes the conferring of a benefit.

2. Isa. 63:7. 3. Ps. 89:3. In the English Bible: *For ever is mercy built.*
4. Exod. 34:6. 5. To the poor. 6. Deut. 24:13. 7. Gen. 15:6.
8. Deut. 6:25.

When refuting the doctrine of divine attributes, we have already explained that every attribute by which God is described in the books of the prophets is an attribute of action.[9] Accordingly He is described as *ḥasid* [*one possessing loving-kindness*][10] because He has brought the all into being; as *ṣaddiq* [*righteous*][11] because of His mercy toward the weak—I refer to the governance of the living being by means of its forces; and as *Judge*[12] because of the occurrence in the world of relative good things and of relative great calamities, necessitated by judgment that is consequent upon wisdom.[13] The *Torah* uses all three terms: *Shall the Judge of all the earth;*[14] *Ṣaddiq* [*righteous*] *and upright is He;*[15] *And abundant in ḥesed* [*loving-kindness*].[16] In interpreting the meaning of these terms, it was our purpose to prepare the way for the chapter that we shall bring after this one.

CHAPTER 54

The term *wisdom* [*ḥokhmah*] is applied in Hebrew in four senses. | It is applied to the apprehension of true realities, which have for their end the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted. It says: *But wisdom, where shall it be found? and so on.*[1] It says: *If thou seek her as silver, and so on.*[2] This usage is frequent. The term is applied to acquiring arts, whatever the art might be: *And every wise-hearted among you;*[3] *And all the women that were wise-hearted.*[4] It is applied to acquiring moral virtues: *And teach his elders wisdom;*[5] *Is wisdom with aged men?*[6]—for the thing that is acquired through mere old age is a disposition to achieve moral virtues. It is applied to the aptitude for stratagems and ruses: *Come, let us deal wisely with them.*[7] According to this meaning it says: *And fetched thence a wise woman,*[8] meaning thereby that she had an aptitude for stratagems and ruses. In this sense it is said: *They are wise to do evil.*[9] It is possible that the

9. Cf. I 53 and 54.
10. A word deriving from the same verbal root as *ḥesed.*
11. A word deriving from the same verbal root as *ṣedaqah.*
12. *Shophet,* a word deriving from the same verbal root as *mishpat.*
13. The Arabic word for "judgment" (*ḥukm*) derives from the same verbal root as the Arabic word for "wisdom" (*ḥikma*).
14. Gen. 18:25. 15. Deut. 32:4. 16. Exod. 34:6.
1. Job 28:12. 2. Prov. 2:4. 3. Exod. 35:10. 4. Exod. 35:25.
5. Ps. 105:22. 6. Job 12:12. 7. Exod. 1:10. 8. II Sam. 14:2.
9. Jer. 4:22.

meaning of *wisdom* in Hebrew indicates aptitude for stratagems and the application of thought in such a way that the stratagems and ruses may be used in achieving either rational or moral virtues, or in achieving skill in a practical art, or in working evil and wickedness. It has accordingly become plain that the term *wise* can be applied to one possessing the rational virtues, to one possessing the moral virtues, to everyone skilled in a practical art, and to one possessing ruses in working evil and wickedness. According to this explanation, one who knows the whole of the Law in its true reality is called *wise* in two respects: in respect of the rational virtues comprised in the Law and in respect of the moral virtues included in it. But since the rational matter in the Law is received through tradition and is not demonstrated by the methods of speculation, the knowledge of the Law came to be set up in the books of the prophets and the sayings of the *Sages* as one separate species and wisdom,[10] in an unrestricted sense, as another species. It is through this wisdom, in an unrestricted sense, that | the rational matter that we receive from the Law through tradition, is demonstrated. All the texts that you find in the [scriptural] books that extol wisdom and speak of its wonder[11] and of the rarity of those who acquire it – *Not many are wise;*[12] *But wisdom, where shall it be found? and so on;*[13] and many other texts of this kind – treat of that wisdom which teaches us to demonstrate the opinions of the *Torah.* This is also frequent in the sayings of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed;* I mean that they set up the knowledge of the *Torah* as one separate species and wisdom as another species. They, *may their memory be blessed,* say of *Moses our Master: He was father in wisdom, father in the Torah, father among the prophets.*[14] And with reference to its dictum concerning *Solomon, And he was wiser than all men,*[15] they say: *Not* [*wiser*] *than Moses;*[16] for the dictum, *than all men,* means: than his contemporaries. Therefore you will find that it mentions *Heman and Khalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol,*[17] who were celebrated then as wise men. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* mention likewise that man is required first to obtain knowledge of the *Torah,* then to obtain wisdom, then to know what is incumbent upon him with regard to the legal science of the Law – I mean the drawing of inferences concerning what one ought to do. And this should be the order observed: The opinions in question should first be known as

10. It is not quite clear whether Maimonides uses here the Hebrew word *ḥokhmah* or the Arabic word *ḥikma*, spelled in the same way. The Arabic word also connotes "philosophy." The Hebrew word may also have this connotation, and if Maimonides used it here, he undoubtedly had this connotation in mind.

11. Or: its strangeness. 12. Job 32:9. 13. Job 28:12. 14. B.T., Megillah, 13a. 15. I Kings 5:11. 16. B.T., Rosh Hashanah, 21b. 17. I Kings 5:11.

being received through tradition; then they should be demonstrated; then the actions through which one's way of life may be ennobled, should be precisely defined. This is what they, *may their memory be blessed*, literally say regarding man's being required to give an account with respect to these three matters in this order. They say: *When man comes to judgment, he is first asked: Have you fixed certain seasons for the study of the Torah? Have you ratiocinated concerning wisdom? Have you inferred one thing from another?*[18] It has thus become clear to you that, according to them, the science of the *Torah* is one species and wisdom is a different species, being the verification of the opinions of the *Torah* through correct speculation. After we have made all these preliminary remarks, hear what we shall say:

The ancient | and the modern philosophers have made it clear that the perfections to be found in man consist of four species. The first and the most defective, but with a view to which the people of the earth spend their lives,[19] is the perfection of possessions—that is, of what belongs to the individual in the manner of money, garments, tools, slaves, land, and other things of this kind. A man's being a great king also belongs to this species of perfection. Between this perfection and the individual himself there is no union whatever; there is only a certain relation, and most of the pleasure taken in the relation is purely imaginary. I refer to one's saying: This is my house; this is my slave; this money is mine; these are my soldiers. For if he considers his own individual self, he will find that all this is outside his self and that each of these possessions subsists as it is by itself. Therefore when the relation referred to has been abolished, there is no difference between an individual who has been a great king and the most contemptible of men, though nothing may have changed in any of the things that were attributed to him. The philosophers have explained that the endeavor and the efforts directed by man toward this kind of perfection are nothing but an effort with a view to something purely imaginary, to a thing that has no permanence. And even if these possessions should remain with him permanently during the whole of his life, he would by no means thereby achieve perfection in his self.

The second species has a greater connection than the first with the individual's self, being the perfection of the bodily constitution and shape—I refer to that individual's temperament being most harmonious, his limbs well proportioned and strong as they ought to be. Neither should this species of perfection be taken as an end, for it is a corporeal perfection and does not belong to man qua man, but qua animal; for man has this in common with

18. B.T., Shabbath, 31a. 19. Or: mutually destroy each other.

the lowest animals. Moreover even if the strength of a human individual reached its greatest | maximum,[20] it would not attain the strength of a strong mule, and still less the strength of a lion or an elephant. The end of this perfection consists, as we have mentioned, in man's transporting a heavy burden or breaking a thick bone and in other things of this kind, from which no great utility for the body may be derived. Utility for the soul is absent from this species of perfection.

The third species is a perfection that to a greater extent than the second species subsists in the individual's self. This is the perfection of the moral virtues. It consists in the individual's moral habits having attained their ultimate excellence.[21] Most of the *commandments* serve no other end than the attainment of this species of perfection. But this species of perfection is likewise a preparation for something else and not an end in itself. For all moral habits are concerned with what occurs between a human individual and someone else. This perfection regarding moral habits is, as it were, only the disposition to be useful to people; consequently it is an instrument for someone else. For if you suppose a human individual is alone, acting on no one, you will find that all his moral virtues are in vain and without employment and unneeded, and that they do not perfect the individual in anything; for he only needs them and they again become useful to him in regard to someone else.

The fourth species is the true human perfection; it consists in the acquisition of the rational virtues – I refer to the conception of intelligibles, which teach true opinions concerning the divine things. This is in true reality the ultimate end; this is what gives the individual true perfection, a perfection belonging to him alone; and it gives him permanent perdurance; through it man is man. If you consider each of the three perfections mentioned before, you will find that they pertain to others than you, not to you, even though, according to the generally accepted opinion, they inevitably | pertain both to you and to others. This ultimate perfection, however, pertains to you alone, no one else being associated in it with you in any way: *They shall be only thine own, and so on.*[22] Therefore you ought to desire to achieve this thing, which will remain permanently with you, and not weary and trouble yourself for the sake of others, O you who neglect your own soul so that its whiteness has turned into blackness through the

20. Literally: finality and end.
21. The Arabic word *faḍīla*, translated "excellence," is the singular of the word translated in the preceding sentence as "virtues."
22. Prov. 5:17.

corporeal faculties having gained dominion over it—as is said in the beginning of the poetical parables that have been coined for these notions; it says: *My mother's sons were incensed against me; they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*[23] It says on this very same subject: *Lest thou give thy splendor unto others, and thy years unto the cruel.*[24]

The prophets too have explained to us and interpreted to us the self-same notions—just as the philosophers have interpreted them—clearly stating to us that neither the perfection of possession nor the perfection of health nor the perfection of moral habits is a perfection of which one should be proud or that one should desire; the perfection of which one should be proud and that one should desire is knowledge of Him, may He be exalted, which is the true science. *Jeremiah* says concerning these four perfections: *Thus saith the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me.*[25] Consider how he mentioned them according to the order given them in the opinion of the multitude. For the greatest perfection in their opinion is that of *the rich man in his riches*, below him *the mighty man in his might*, and below him *the wise man in his wisdom*. [By the expression, "the wise man in his wisdom,"] he means him who possesses the moral virtues; for such an individual is also held in high esteem by the multitude, to whom the discourse in question is addressed. Therefore these perfections are arranged in this order. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, apprehended from this *verse* the | very notions we have mentioned and have explicitly stated that which I have explained to you in this chapter: namely, that the term *wisdom* [*ḥokhmah*], used in an unrestricted sense and regarded as the end, means in every place the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted; that the possession of the treasures acquired, and competed for, by man and thought to be perfection are not a perfection; and that similarly all the actions prescribed by the Law—I refer to the various species of worship and also the moral habits that are useful to all people in their mutual dealings—that all this is not to be compared with this ultimate end and does not equal it, being but preparations made for the sake of this end. Hear verbatim a text of theirs dealing with all these notions; it is a text in *Bereshith Rabbah*. It is said there: *One scriptural dictum says: And all things desirable are not to be compared unto her.*[26] *Another scriptural dictum says: And all things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.*[27] *The*

23. Song of Songs 1:6. 24. Prov. 5:9. 25. Jer. 9:22–23. 26. Prov. 8:11. 27. Prov. 3:15.

expression, things desirable, refers to commandments and good actions; while, things thou canst desire, refers to precious stone and pearls. Neither things desirable nor things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me.[28] Consider how concise is this saying, how perfect is he who said it, and how he left out nothing of all that we have mentioned and that we have interpreted and led up to at length.

As we have mentioned this *verse* and the wondrous notions contained in it, and as we have mentioned the saying of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, about it, we will complete the exposition of what it includes. For when explaining in this *verse* the noblest ends, he does not limit them only to the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted. For if this were his purpose, he would have said: *But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me*, and have stopped there; or he would have said: *that he understandeth and knoweth Me that I am One;* or he would have said: *that I have no figure*, or *that | there is none like Me*, or something similar. But he says that one should glory in the apprehension of Myself and in the knowledge of My attributes, by which he means His actions, as we have made clear[29] with reference to its dictum: *Show me now Thy ways, and so on.*[30] In this *verse*[31] he makes it clear to us that those actions that ought to be known and imitated are *loving-kindness, judgment*, and *righteousness*. He adds another corroborative notion through saying, *in the earth*[32] – this being a pivot of the Law. For matters are not as the overbold opine who think that His providence, may He be exalted, terminates at the sphere of the moon and that the earth and that which is in it are neglected: *The Lord hath forsaken the earth.*[33] Rather is it as has been made clear to us by the Master of those who know: *That the earth is the Lord's.*[34] He means to say that His providence also extends over the earth in the way that corresponds to what the latter is, just as His providence extends over the heavens[35] in the way that corresponds to what they are. This is what he says: *That I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth.*[36] Then he completes the notion by saying: *For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*[37] He means that it is My purpose that there should come from you *loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment in the earth* in the way we have explained[38] with regard to the *thirteen attributes*: namely, that the purpose should be assimilation to them and that this should be our way of life. Thus the end that he sets forth in this *verse* may be stated as follows:

28. Genesis Rabbah, XXXV *in fine*. 29. Cf. I 54. 30. Exod. 33:13.
31. Jer. 9:23 is referred to. 32. Jer. 9:23. 33. Ezek. 9:9. 34. Exod. 9:29.
35. In the singular in Arabic. 36. Jer. 9:23. 37. Jer. 9:23. 38. Cf. I 54.

It is clear that the perfection of man that may truly be gloried in is the one acquired by him who has achieved, in a measure corresponding to his capacity, apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, and who knows His providence extending over His creatures as manifested in the act of bringing them into being and in their governance as it is. The way of life of such an individual, after he has achieved this apprehension, will always have in view *loving-kindness*, *righteousness*, and *judgment*, through assimilation to His actions, may He be exalted, just as we have explained several times in this Treatise. |

This is the extent of what I thought fit that we should set down in this Treatise; it is a part of what I consider very useful to those like you. I hope for you that through sufficient reflection you will grasp all the intentions I have included therein, with the help of God, may He be exalted; and that He will grant us *and all [the people of] Israel, being fellows*, that which He has promised us: *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.*[39] *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*[40]

AMEN

God is very near to everyone who calls,
If he calls truly and has no distractions;
He is found by every seeker who searches for Him,
If he marches toward Him and goes not astray.

*

The Third Part

HAS BEEN COMPLETED WITH THE HELP OF GOD

AND WITH ITS COMPLETION THERE HAS BEEN COMPLETED

THE GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED

39. Isa. 35:5. 40. Isa. 9:1.

GLOSSARY

*

ABILITY TO ACT *istiṭāᶜa*
ACCIDENT *ᶜaraḍ*
ACT, ACTUALITY *fiᶜl*
ADMISSIBILITY *tajwīz*
AFFECTION *infiᶜāl*
AFFIRMATION (*see* AVER) *taṣdīq*; *ījāb*
AGENT (*see* EFFICIENT CAUSE; MAKER) *fāᶜil*
AMPHIBOLOUS *mushakkak*
ANALOGY (*see* REASONING; SYLLOGISM) *qiyās*
APTITUDE (*see* DISPOSITION) *hayᵓa*
APPREHEND (*see* GRASP) *adraka*
APPREHENSION *idrāk*
ARTIFICER *ṣāniᶜ*
ASSERT (*see* ESTABLISH) *athbata*
ATOM (*see* SUBSTANCE) *jawhar*, *jawhar fard*; *juzᵓ* (literal meaning "part") *juzᵓ lā yatajazzaᵓu*
ATTRIBUTE *ṣifa*
ATTRIBUTE, AFFIRMATIVE; ATTRIBUTE OF AFFIRMATION *ṣifat al-ījāb*
ATTRIBUTE, ESSENTIAL *ṣifa dhātiyya*
ATTRIBUTE OF NEGATION *ṣifat al-salb*
ATTRIBUTE, NEGATIVE *ṣifa salbiyya*
AVER (*see* AFFIRMATION) *ṣaddaqa*
BEGINNING (*see* PRINCIPLE) *mabdaᵓ*
BEING (*see* EXISTENCE) *wujūd*
BELIEF *iᶜtiqād*
BRINGER OF THE NOMOS (*see* LEGISLATOR) *wāḍiᶜ al-nāmūs*
CENTER *markaz*
CERTAINTY; CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE *yaqīn*
CHAPTER *faṣl*
CHARACTER (*see* MORAL QUALITIES) *khulq*
CHARACTERISTIC (*see* MEANING; NOTION) *maᶜnā*
CITY *madīna*
COMING-INTO-BEING (*see* CREATION IN TIME; GENERATION) *kawn*; *ḥudūth*
COMMAND (*see* MATTER; ORDER) *amr*
COMMUNITY; RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY *milla*
COMPOSITION *tarkīb*
CORPOREALITY (DOCTRINE OF) *jismāniyya*; *tajsīm*
CORRELATION *iḍāfa*
CORRUPTION (*see* PASSING-AWAY) *fasād*
CREATED IN TIME *muḥdath*
CREATION IN TIME (*see* COMING-INTO-BEING) *ḥudūth*
DEFINITION *ḥadd*
DEITY *ilāh*
DEMONSTRATION *burhān*
DERIVATIVE (*see* FIGURATIVE MEANING) *mustaᶜār*

DISPOSITION *hayʾa; istiʿdād*
DISPOSITION, NATURAL *jibilla*
DISTANCE *masāfa*
DIVINE (*see* METAPHYSICAL) *ilāhī*
DIVINE SCIENCE *ʿilm ilāhī*
ECCENTRIC SPHERE *falak khārij al-markaz*
EFFICIENT CAUSE (*see* AGENT; MAKER) *fāʿil*
ELITE (*see* PROPERTY) *khāṣṣa*
END (FINAL) (*see* FINALITY) *ghāya*
EPICYCLE *falak tadwīr*
EQUIVOCAL *mushtarik*
ESSENCE (*see* QUIDDITY) *dhāt; māhiyya*
ESTABLISH; ESTABLISH THE TRUTH OF (*see* ASSERT) *athbata*
ETERNAL (*see* PRE-ETERNAL) *qadīm*
EXISTENCE; THAT WHICH EXISTS (*see* BEING) *wujūd*
FACULTY (*see* FORCE; POTENTIALITY) *quwwa*
FACULTY, RATIONAL *quwwa nāṭiqa*
FANTASY *wahm*
PRODUCE THE FANTASY (*see* SUGGEST TO THE ESTIMATIVE FACULTY) *awhama*
FIGURATIVE MEANING (*see* DERIVATIVE) *istiʿāra*
FINALITY (*see* END) *ghāya*
FORCE (*see* FACULTY; POTENTIALITY) *quwwa*
GENERATION (*see* COMING-INTO-BEING) *kawn*
GENUS *jins*
GOD *allāh*
GOVERNANCE *tadbīr*
GRACE *luṭf*
GRACIOUSNESS, WILY *talaṭṭuf*
GRASP (*see* APPREHEND) *adraka*
GUIDE *dalāla*
HABIT; HABITUS *malaka*
HABIT (with reference to the doctrines held by the Mutakallimūn) *ʿāda*
HIDDEN (*see* INNER; INTERNAL) *bāṭin*
IMAGINATION *khayāl; takhayyul*
IMAGINING, VAIN *khayāl*
INDIVIDUAL *shakhṣ*
INDWELLING *sakīna*
INFIDELITY *kufr*
INFINITE *mā lā nihāya lahu*
INNER CONTENT (*see* HIDDEN; INTERNAL MEANING) *bāṭin*
INSTANT ("NOW") *ān*
INTELLECT *ʿaql*
INTELLECT, ACQUIRED *ʿaql mustafād*
INTELLECT, ACTIVE *ʿaql faʿʿāl*
INTELLECTUALLY COGNIZED OBJECT (*see* INTELLIGIBLE) *maʿqūl*
INTELLECTUALLY COGNIZING SUBJECT *ʿāqil*
INTELLIGIBLE (*see* INTELLECTUALLY COGNIZED OBJECT) *maʿqūl*
INTERNAL MEANING (*see* HIDDEN; INNER CONTENT) *bāṭin*
LAW *sharīʿa*
LEGAL COMPILATION *taʾlīf fiqh*
LEGAL SCIENCE; LEGALISTIC STUDY *fiqh*
LEGISLATOR (*see* BRINGER OF THE NOMOS) *wādiʿ al-nāmūs*
MAKER (*see* AGENT; EFFICIENT CAUSE) *fāʿil*
MATTER (1) *shayʾ; amr*
MATTER (2) *mādda*
MEANING (*see* CHARACTERISTIC; NOTION; THING) *maʿnā*
METAPHYSICAL (*see* DIVINE) *ilāhī*
MIND *dhihn*
MODE *ḥāl*
MORAL QUALITIES (*see* CHARACTER) *akhlāq*
MULTITUDE *jumhūr*
NATION *umma*

NOMOS *nāmūs; sharīᶜa nāmūsiyya*
NONBEING; NONEXISTENCE (*see* PRIVATION) *ᶜadam*
NOTION (*see* CHARACTERISTIC; MEANING; THING) *maᶜnā*
ONENESS *waḥda; waḥdāniyya*
ORDER (*see* COMMAND; MATTER) *amr*
OVERFLOW *fayḍ*
PARABLE *mathal*
PART; PARTICLE (*see* ATOM) *juzᵓ*
PART OF THE BODY *ᶜaḍw*
PARTICULARIZATION *takhṣīṣ*
PARTICULARIZE (*see* PROPRIUM; PROVIDE) *khaṣṣaṣa*
PASSING-AWAY (*see* CORRUPTION) *fasād, fanāᵓ*
PERPLEXED *ḥāᵓir*
PLACE (*see* SPACE) *makān*
PLACE, NATURAL *mawḍiᶜ ṭabīᶜī*
POTENTIALITY (*see* FACULTY; FORCE) *quwwa*
PRE-ETERNAL *qadīm*
PREMISE; PRIMARY PROPOSITION *muqaddima*
PRINCIPLE (*see* BEGINNING) *mabdaᵓ*
PRIVATION (*see* NONBEING) *ᶜadam*
PROPERTY (*see* ELITE) *khāṣṣa*
PROPHET *nabiyy*
PROPRIUM, PROVIDE WITH *khaṣṣaṣa*
PROVIDENCE *ᶜināya*
QUIDDITY (*see* ESSENCE) *māhiyya*
REASONING (*see* ANALOGY; SYLLOGISM) *qiyās*
RELATION *nisba*
RELIGION *dīn*
REPRESENTATION *taṣawwur*
RIDDLE *laghz*
SOVEREIGN *sulṭān*
SPACE (*see* PLACE) *makān; buᶜd*
SPECIES *nawᶜ*
SPECULATION *naẓar*
SPHERE *falak; kurra*
SUBSTANCE *jawhar*
SUBSTRATUM *maḥall; mawḍūᶜ*
SUBSTRATUM, SERVE AS A *ḥamala*
SUGGEST TO THE ESTIMATIVE FACULTY (*see* PRODUCE THE FANTASY) *awhama*
SYLLOGISM (*see* ANALOGY; REASONING) *qiyās*
TEMPERAMENT *mizāj*
THING (*see* CHARACTERISTIC; MEANING; NOTION) *shayᵓ; amr; maᶜnā*
TIME *zamān*
TREATISE *maqāla*
TRUE REALITY *ḥaqīqa*
UNIVERSALS (*see* MEANING; NOTION) *maᶜānī kulliyya*
VACUUM *khalāᵓ*

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